

AT HOME ON LEAVE
LOVE SONGS FROM INDIA



J. D. B. GRIBBLE.

S. o. angl. Gribble

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LOVE SONGS FROM INDIA,

NEW AND OLD.

BY

J. D. B. GRIBBLE,

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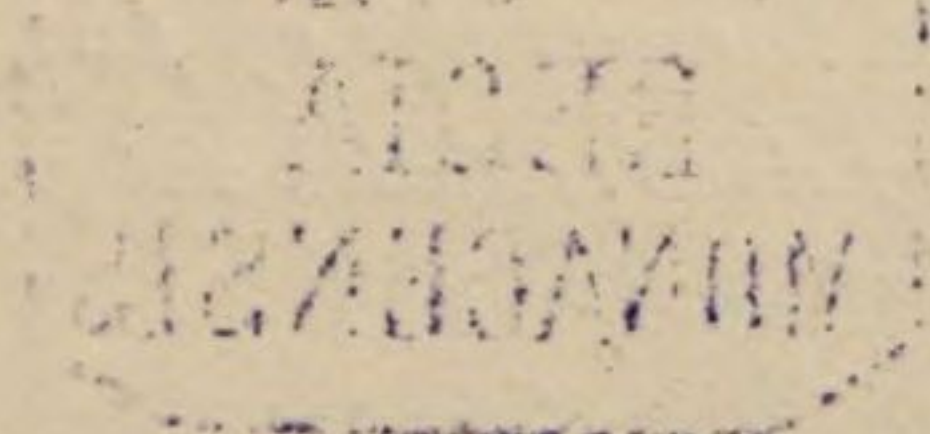
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TO MY FATHER,

THESE MY

FIRST FRUITS.



On coming home from India, my dear father, my first wish was to see you, to whom I owe so much, and to whom, alas! I have as yet given so little in return; now, on the eve of returning to India, I ask you to accept what my year of furlough has produced. You who have travelled so much in the world, and who, wherever you have been, have been so beloved, will be able to appreciate these little stories, of which love is the subject-matter.

I ask you, therefore, to accept this my first, and perhaps my last, book, as a pledge of my sincere affection and gratitude.

PREFACE.

IF a preface should be, as it often is, another word for an apology, I have none to write. An offering, to be worth anything, should be the best a man can give ; and when a man knows that he has given his best, he does not, or should not, dream of offering an apology with it, however small the intrinsic value of the gift may be, for no apology he can give will enhance its value. It is in this spirit that I offer my little book to the public. I do not present them with the fruits of hard labour, produced by the light of midnight oil ; I offer merely the results of many a happy leisure hour, and sincerely trust that some pleasure may be obtained by the perusal, of what it has given me infinite pleasure to write. My own vanity, a proper share of which is becoming to

every man, prevents me from thinking that to me applies Pope's often quoted lines—

“ Lo ! the poor child, by nature's kindly law,
Pleased with a rattle, and tickled with a straw ! ”

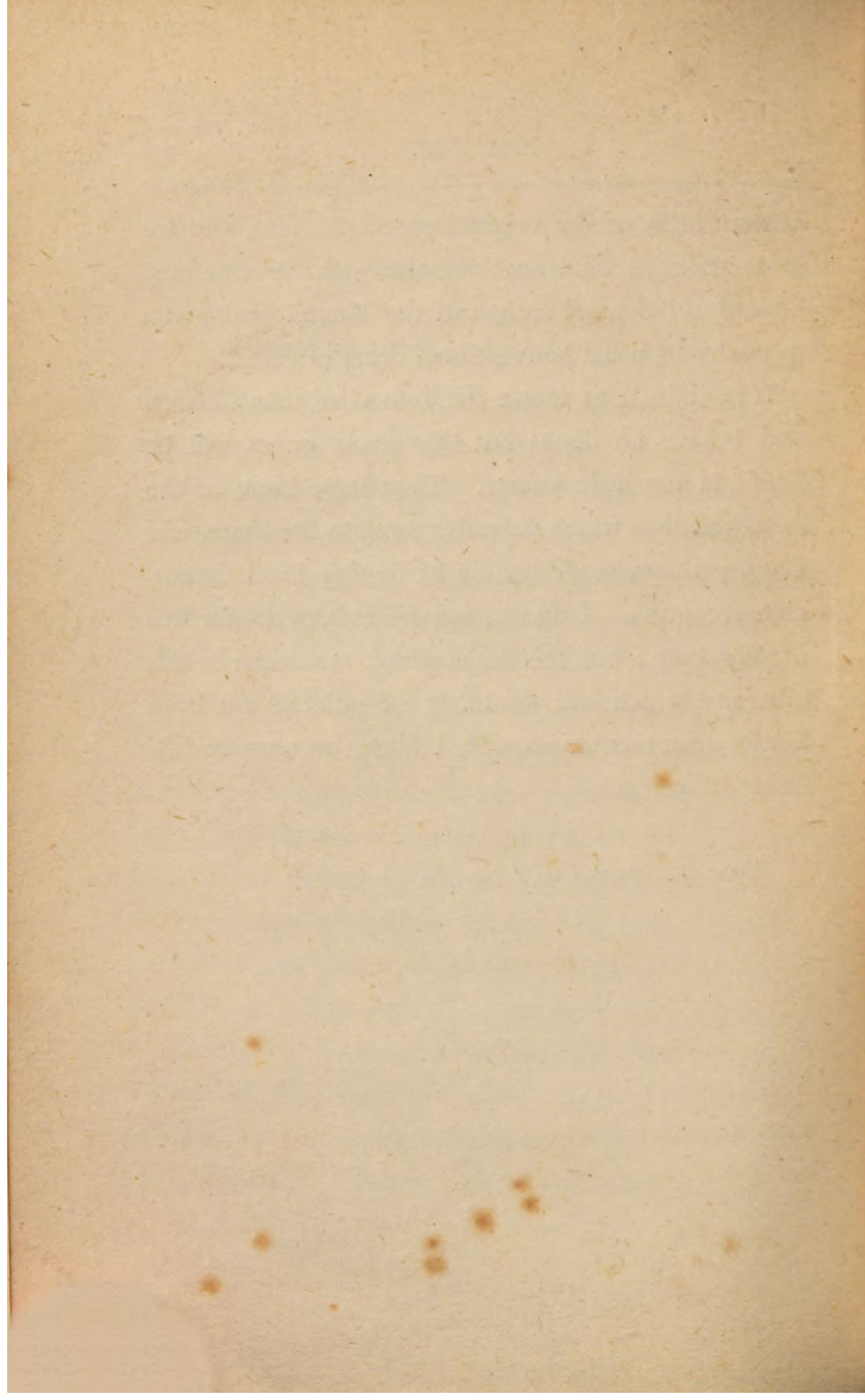
and I therefore cannot help thinking that what has pleased me will also please others.

One word regarding the Sanscrit legends ;—a residence of some years in India, and the study of Sanscrit rendered me familiar with some of them. *Holzmann's Indische Sagen*, in which most of them are to be found, made me better acquainted with them. I believe that “Sawitri” has already appeared in an English form, though I have not been able to obtain it. The form in which it now appears is more an English adaptation than a translation of the original ; and with the liberty which an adapter enjoys, I have ventured on some touches of my own, though in the quotations put into Sawitri's mouth, as well as in those used by the other *dramatis personæ*, it will, I think, be found that I have adhered closely to the original. “Dasārāt's Sin” is more literal, and in it I have followed the rendering of Holzmann in his “Rama nach Valmiki.” “Rohini” and “Gatokatsha's Birth,”

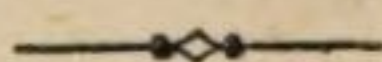
contain little of the original except the plot, and are more attempts than anything else, and the same may be said of "Santa," though in the latter I have given to poetry its usual conventional dress of verse.

It is difficult to infuse life into dead men's bones, and I have no doubt but that many errors will be found in my little poems. They have none of the sensationalism which pervades modern literature, and I am, perhaps, too sanguine in hoping for a favourable reception. I do not ask for indulgence for this my first-born; but the faults which may exist in this one, and which will doubtless be pointed out by a kindly meant criticism, will, I hope, be remedied in future offspring.

DRESDEN, *August* 1872.



CONTENTS.

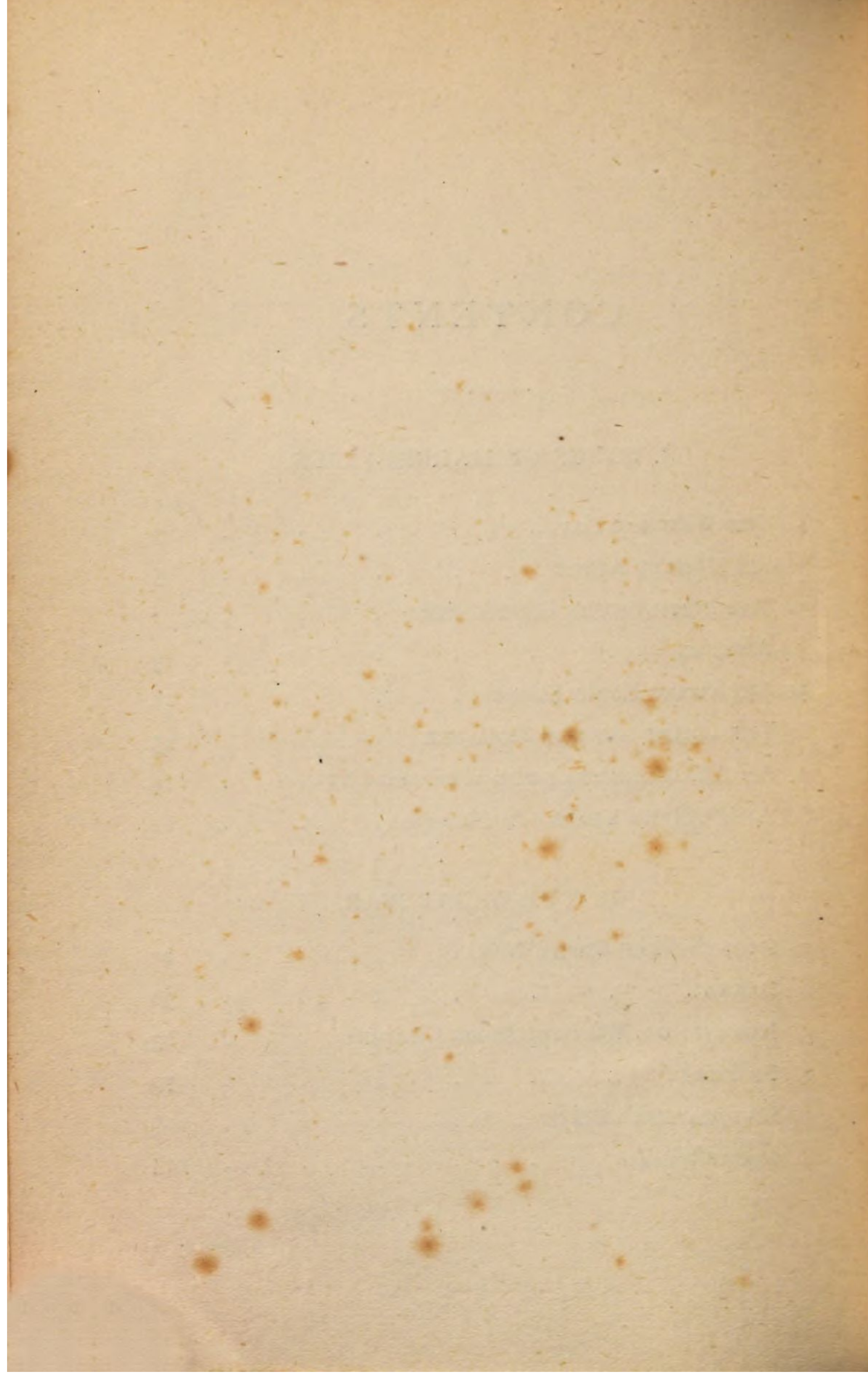


I. SONGS OF MARRIED LIFE.

	PAGE
1. THE WEDDING-DAY	3
2. SIX MONTHS AFTER	5
3. THE BIRTH OF THE FIRST CHILD	7
4. ABSENCE	9
5. REVISITING EARLY SCENES	12
6. THE HEART AND THE TREASURE	15
7. AN ANNIVERSARY OF THE WEDDING-DAY	19
8. AFTER MANY YEARS— <i>In Memoriam</i>	21

II. THE GREAT WAR.

1. STORY OF THE GREAT WAR	27
2. SANTA	50
3. ROHINI : OR, WHY THE MOON CHANGES	63
4. SAWITRI	70
5. GATOKATSHA'S BIRTH	107
6. DASARÂT'S SIN	113



Part First.

—o—

SONGS OF MARRIED LIFE.

The following little songs were chiefly written in India, and may perhaps give a not uncommon outline of a happy married life, applicable as well to the West as to the East.



Songs of Married Life.

—o—

I.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

THIS morn right gladly rose the sun,
And softly blew the western wind,
The flow'rets opened every one,
No single bud was left behind.

Say, why is Nature glad to-day?
For what bright feast does she prepare?
Why sweeter sounds the birds' soft lay?
Why blooms each bud and tree more fair
Though quickly rose the sun at dawn.
'Twill linger ere it set at eve ;



It hastened to commence the morn,
But fain would tarry ere it leave.

The sun, the wind, the budding flower,
The bird's sweet piping, thrilling note,
The day itself, and every hour,
All speak with swelling loving throat.

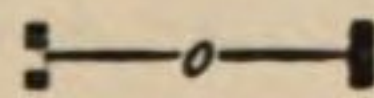
Each brings a message from above,
From Him who gave to each its life;
Each brings a greeting full of love,
To cheer His servants—man and wife.

Fain would each messenger prolong
The message he delights to say;
Fain would each linger o'er his song,
That ne'er might end this wedding-day.

Though Nature makes this day so fair,
The day which seals our mutual love,
We both will long the joys to share
Of endless wedding-day above.

II.

SIX MONTHS AFTER.



SURE the Greeks were right proud of their
dauntless arms,

And thought that they ruled the earth ;
Alexander wept for a new conquest's charms,
And sighed for a country's birth.
Ere centuries passed, the Romans soon found
Fresh nations, they strove to subdue ;
New lands were invaded beyond the old bound,
New monarchs for mercy did sue.

At Rome, though the countries were many which
quailed,

There are lands which she never saw ;
Though her ships over many an ocean sailed,
There are seas which knew not her law.

Still Romans or Greeks, the proud thought was the
same,

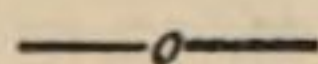
They fancied the world at their feet ;
All nations, they boasted, had heard of their fame,
And the feeling of conquest was sweet.

So, dearest, with me, when, a few months ago,
Your hair in my fingers I curled,
You asked how I loved you, and, whispering low,
I answered, " Far more than the world ! "
I thought it was true when I said it was so,
But now I am perfectly sure ;
However I loved you a few months ago,
I love you at present much more.

From the Greeks and the Romans a lesson I'll
learn,
Nor think I have seen all my earth ;
Fresh beauties and pleasures I trust I shall earn,
Fresh love to fresh love shall give birth.
Then, dearest, whenever you ask me alone,
In those accents so tender and low,
" Say, how do you love me ? my darling, my own ! "
I'll answer, " As much as I know ! "

III.

SOON AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE
FIRST CHILD.



“**T**ELL me the sight most fair to thee,
The one which joys thine eyes ;
The sight thou lovest most to see,
The one thou most dost prize !”

Fair is the world, and passing fair
Each tree, each budding flower ;
Bright are the birds which throng the air,
And sweet the passing shower.

I've stood on lofty hills, and seen
The sun, when sinking low,
Throw glorious shades of purple sheen
O'er wilds of driven snow.

I've seen the clouds come from the North
O'er fields of thirsty grain,
And felt the joy which then breaks forth
As earth is cooled by rain.

And once I thought—not long ago—
That nought could fairer be
Than eyes which tell the tale I know—
The love thou hast for me.

Fair as these sights, there's one more fair,
And far more dear to me ;
'Tis one in which I have a share,
And one I share with thee.

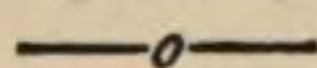
'Tis when, our darling on thy breast,
I look on her and thee,
And thou, whilst lulling her to rest,
Look'st kind and true on me.

My darling one ! my love ! my life !
Say, what more fair can be
Than thou, my little loving wife,
And the child God gave to me ?

IV.

ABSENCE.

(FROM THE HUSBAND ON THE PLAINS TO THE WIFE ON THE HILLS.)



OF what do you think I dreamed last night,
 In the pale chilly rays of the moon,
 When the morning star rose sparkling bright,
 And proclaimed the day would come soon?

I dreamt that the bright beaming morning star
 Not only announced the day near,
 But whispered to me, "The day is not far
 When you'll meet your own loved ones so dear!"

I dreamt that I thought this message was true,
 Nor wondered to hear a star's voice;
 For what so worthy to speak of you,—
 My guide-star, the star of my choice?

I woke, and I cried, "It's only a dream,
Which ne'er will its promises keep ;"
And coldly I saw the starlight gleam,
And I sighed as I fell asleep.

Again I dreamt that I saw the star
Move out from its post so high ;
It twinkled and beckoned while yet afar,
So friendly it looked when nigh.

And nearer it came, and nearer to me,
Until it came close to my bed,
And then it stooped down, and whispered, "See !"
I opened my eyes, and it fled.

But there on the pillow, quite close to my head,
Where yours has been pillowed so oft,
Lay your letter, which I had lovingly read,
Which had brought me these dreams so soft.

And then I knew what the star meant to say
When it beckoned so friendly to me ;
It meant that the post would bring to-day
A message of love from thee.

You are now, my dearest, as ever you are,
 Far nearer to heaven than I,
 So no wonder you got a sister star
 With your message of love to fly!



V.

REVISITING EARLY SCENES.

QUEN the sandy banks of the swift Penn'yar,*
Near the town where it joins the sea,
There's a spot which, when you see from afar,
You'll remember is dear to me.

In this quiet nook is a small rising hill,
With weeds and with thorns overgrown ;
But a seat on the top may be traced still,
Of mouldering brick and of stone.

No landscape so wide, or fields waving fair,
No glimpse of the wild surging seas ;
A dry field of sand is all that is there,
Fringed round with palmyra-trees.

* The Penn'yar flows into the sea on the Coromandel Coast, a few hundred yards to the north of Cuddalore.

'Tis not for its beauty I love that hill,
Nor yet for its soft languid ease,
Nor e'en for its quiet, so sweet and still,
Nor for scenes which the eye can please.

'Twas there that I pressed you first to my heart,
And gave you that first clinging kiss ;
'Twas there that we swore we would never part—
'Tis this I remember ! 'tis this !

“ Though weeds have sprung up on this lonely bench,
And though thorns now cover the seat,
No weeds shall spring up our love to quench,
No thorns to embitter its sweet ! ”

It was thus I vowed to my promised wife,
As we sat on that lonely hill ;
It was thus I swore to cherish her life,
And in trouble to love her still.

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A few days ago we both went again
To that seat on the rising ground,
And a sweet little child was with us then,
As we climbed the ancient mound.

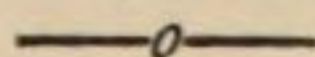
Fresh marks of ruin were on the old stone,
And new heaps of mouldering lime ;
Fresh weeds and thorns o'er the seat had grown,
The marks of decay-bringing Time.

But Time, which can moulder the firmest rock,
To us shall no enemy prove ;
For Time, which to granite gives a shock,
But adds firmer ties to our love.

What tie can be closer, or bind more near,
Than she who is born to us both ?
And she is the gift of the new-born year,
And has given our love fresh growth.

So as Time slips by with its rapid stride,
And adds to us year upon year,
It shall never serve our love to divide,
But make each to other more dear.

VI.

THE HEART AND THE TREASURE.

A FRIEND I had who loved me very dear,
Whose care forestalled my every wish and
thought ;

My happiness to Him was always near,
His was the hand that every bounty brought.
But yet, methinks, I scarce repaid His care,
And what He gave, I took, as if my own ;
'Tis true I prized His gifts as treasures rare,
But thought that I had earned them all alone.

At last one precious gift my Friend bestowed,
Which I had longed for, as a prize most sweet ;
Each day my treasure some fresh beauty showed,
Until at last I thought my joy complete.
But though no words of mine can rightly tell
How much I loved and prized what I had got,

I failed to thank the Friend, who loved so well,
And in the gift, the Giver kind forgot.

But then, ah me ! it happened one fair day,
That this sweet treasure, which I thought my own,
Was taken from me—taken quite away,
And weeping, grieving, I was left alone.
Alone? The child I loved so well lies there,
The same sweet look upon his winning face,
The half-closed chubby hand, the flaxen hair,
All show a strange and more than earthly grace.

Yes ; this is mine, this cold and stiffening clay,
This is the son that hung upon my breast ;
Still mine, and will be for another day,
But then laid low to take his last long rest.
But stay—*can* this be mine, my much-loved son?
This cold pale form devoid of life and breath?
My son had life—I loved a living one,—
But this, though fair, is nothing more than death.

Is life then dead? No, no ! life cannot die ;
Hence he I loved is now no longer here.

Where then ? “ Ah, thankless one ! with Me on high,
Where sorrow is not, grief or bitter tear.
The soul which erst this body did pervade,
Was sent by Me, thy loving bounteous Friend ;
From love to thee alone, the gift I made,
But now resume the life I did but lend.”

Fool that I was ! that I should ever dream
A joy could longer last than one brief day ;
All things on earth, how perfect they may seem,
Must have an end, must pass at length away.
Ay, thankless fool ! that I should e'er forget
To render thanks for what my God might send ;
That I should murmur, or with tears regret,
That what I loved so much should have an end.

No, I will rather humbly thank Him now,
For His great love in granting me such joy ;
My head in grateful homage I will bow,
That He was pleased to give and take my boy.
Why should *I* always take ? I, too, will show
That I have got a pure unselfish love,
And thank Him, that He chose me here below
To make a spotless soul for Him above.

And I will love Him more than I have done,
Not only for His constant love and care,
But also that He chose *my* much-loved son
To dwell with Him for aye in realms of air.
And since my treasure now has gone before,
I'll calmly wait till I from hence shall flee,
And daily long for heaven, more and more,
For "where my treasure is my heart would be."



VII.

*ON AN ANNIVERSARY OF THE
WEDDING-DAY.*

—o—

FULL many a rapid year has fled
Since, kneeling down with bended head,
We swore the holy marriage oath,
Which bound for life the lives of both :
In joy or sorrow, woe or wealth,
In sickness or in blooming health,
We swore to cherish and to love,
Till death should call to heaven above.
True was our oath, and truly kept,
Nor yet our love has cooled or slept ;
For faithful, to each other true,
Since then our lives we've travelled through ;
In virgin forests wild and drear,
With ne'er a friend or comfort near ;

O'er stormy seas and ocean's foam,
Now bearing to, now from our home ;
In scorching plains of far-off Ind,
Panting to breathe the sea-born wind ;
In joy o'er babes by Heaven lent ;
In grief o'er babes, whose young life spent,
Have gone to join the God above,
Who loved them more than we could love.
Through all these scenes, in many a land,
We've wandered always hand-in-hand ;
And now, on this our marriage-day,
We both review the past, and say,
" The blessing of my life was found
When God our lives together bound ! "



VIII.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

—o—

COME, Rachel, draw more close to me,
And lay your head upon my knee ;
I love to stroke your nut-brown hair,
And pet your little hand so fair.
Here, turn your cheek to look at me,
That I your large dark eyes may see ;
For thus I love to have you lie,
Whilst I can dream of days gone by.
Ah, child ! you have your mother's eyes,
Which more than jewels I did prize ;
For ne'er a jewel yet I saw,
In which some blow would cause no flaw,
Or some rough usage dim its light,
And break its rays so dazzling bright ;

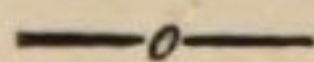
But in *her* eyes no change I saw,
Their dazzling light not time could flaw ;
Like as her first, was her last look
When she from me her farewell took ;—
And then,—when gone was her last breath,
Her loving eyes were closed in death.
Nor can I think their light now dim,
But brighter far they gaze at Him,
Who loved her with such tender love,
And took her then to realms above ;
For since her soul could never die,
But rose to be with God on high,
Methinks her eyes still brightly beam,
For in her eyes her soul did seem.
Full twenty years have since gone by—
To you, perhaps, they seemed to fly ;
To me, who live but in the past,
Each year seemed longer than the last.

Like to a ship by wild winds driven,
Her stays and gear in pieces riven,
O'er seas as high as mountains tossed,
Her rudder gone, her anchors lost ;
A cruel coast to leeward lying,
T'wards which with fatal haste she's flying,

Until at last she sights it there,
A barren coast, of harbours bare,
With steep bluff rocks, abrupt descending,
From friends alike as foes defending ;
Upon whose base the surfs which break,
Seem with their force the cliffs to shake,
And boast in rumbling notes of thunder,
Of gallant ships they've cast asunder.
The ship drives on, whilst anxious fear
Haunts those who see the danger near ;
They see the sky with darks clouds lowering ;
They see the land with high cliffs towering ;
And just as every hope seemed o'er,
When nearer ever draws the shore,
The iron wall seems to divide,
And shows an opening in its side,
Where stands revealed a welcome sight,
A safe and sheltered hill-bound bight !
And, lo ! yon point so sharp and bare
Is passed, nor yet an inch to spare ;
And then the ship securely glides,
To where in safety now she rides ;
The rocks she feared now safely guard her,
From winds and waves securely ward her.

Think you that one on board that day,
Will e'er forget that peaceful bay,
Nor call to mind the safety given,
By that safe-sheltered wind-bound haven?
'Twas thus with me,—I too was tossed
In life's mad whirl, my rudder lost ;
I too by fierce excitement driven,
Looked vainly for some port or haven ;
And always still the rocks were nearing,
Fresh dangers always fast appearing ;
But when at last so near the shore,
That help seemed vain and hope seemed o'er,
I found a heart and faithful breast,
Where I in joy and care could rest ;
Which told me, all life's troubles through
'Twould beat for me, both chaste and true.
Can I forget this loving heart,
Though now her spirit dwells apart?
Ah, no ! though her sweet life is o'er,
I feel that she's but gone before.
In Faith, and Hope, and Love, but one,
I know, when my life's sand is run ;
Us, who life's joys and griefs did share,
E'en death shall not asunder tear.

Part Second.



THE STORY OF THE "GREAT WAR."



I.

THE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR.

— 0 —

THE legends which follow are in reality only episodes of this poem. They are told, amongst many others of the same nature, by the various characters introduced, and form pleasant resting-places from the never-ending fighting incidents of the Mahábhárat. A slight sketch of this, by name, celebrated poem may not be here amiss. It is scarcely probable that an English reader will ever get beyond a "slight sketch" of it, for the original work occupies four quarto volumes, and the most enthusiastic lover of Sanscrit poetry would weary before he half finished it.

The two principal poems in Sanscrit are the Mahábhárat (or the Great War) and the Ramáyana. The former is ascribed to the poet Vyása, and was probably written in the fourteenth century before Christ. The Ramáyana was written by Valmiki, and is in all probability of a still later date. Whenever the authors of these poems lived, it is evident from the context of them, that the Ramáyana relates the history of events of greater antiquity than those narrated in the Mahábhárat. In the Ramáyana a simpler state of society is depicted, and a more general purity of manners. The Mahábhárat appears, on the other hand, to narrate the events which led to the breaking up a great kingdom, consequent on the introduction of sensuality and excess. It was owing to the "Great War" that the kingdom, founded by Rama, the hero of the Ramáyana, was broken up and divided into the numerous petty states, which for so many centuries have been the cause of India's weakness, and have placed her at the mercy of so many conquerors.

A peculiarity of both poems, and indeed of Sanscrit literature generally, is the wish of the author to make his book as comprehensive as possible ; and instead, therefore, of merely referring the reader by a footnote

to some other author, as is the general practice in modern literature, the poet gives the whole of the knowledge he possesses in the body of the poem. At the time these poems were written books were rarities. Literature was almost exclusively confined to the Brahmins ; copies of books were seldom made ; and the authors travelled about with their works from one native court to another, and earned sometimes a magnificent livelihood by the recital or reading of their own poems. It was necessary, therefore, that each work should comprise as far as possible every detail, and the more such that were introduced, the more complete and perfect was the poem considered.

The plot of the Mahábhárat is as follows :—Yuzishtara was the king of the Panduings. At a large entertainment given by him in his castle, he begins to play with his cousin Duryozana, at a game, which, from the description, would appear to have been dice, though it is not improbable that there was more skill in it than we understand from the same game. Yuzishtara is most unfortunate ; he loses at each successive throw, and one is almost led to imagine that his cousin had clogged or tampered with

the dice. Yuzishtara stakes his horses, his jewels, his treasures, his kingdom, the freedom of his brothers, and at last his own liberty ; but each stake in succession is lost. At length he stakes his wife, Draupadi, and again he loses. Draupadi is summoned, but she at first refuses to come, and is at last brutally dragged into the banqueting-hall by the hair. There she is told that she has become the property of Duryozana, but she at once refuses to obey her new master, and argues, that as her husband had already lost himself before he had staked her, he was only a slave of the winner, and possessed of nothing. Being possessed of nothing, he had nothing to stake ; and the wager in which she was concerned is not therefore binding. This nice point is referred to the winner for arbitration, and he gives it against himself, and allows Draupadi to go free. Yuzishtara, with his wife and followers, then go into banishment, and Duryozana takes possession of the vacant throne.

Before many years have passed, the banished king grew tired of his exile. His friends urged upon him that Duryozana had made use of foul play, and he therefore makes an attempt to regain his throne. It is the war which follows which forms the subject of

the poem. It has the regular Homeric cling, and the poem rolls on majestically to the sound of trumpets and war-horses.

Throughout the poem, the side of Yuzishtara is distinguished for its cunning and its stratagems ; whilst that of Duryozana has heroes of a more manly and honest mould, who, however, fall victims to the wiles employed by their opponents, the Panduings. As in Homeric conflicts, the principal part of the fight is borne by the chiefs on either side, and each hero has some favouring deity. Until the chiefs meet each other, any one of them individually appears to be irresistible. He slaughters far and near in the opposing ranks, until at last he meets with a hero of his own calibre. The rank and file then form a ring, and leave the two mighty ones to fight it out, whilst they look on with interest.

The fighting is supposed to extend over nine days, and has more the character of one continuous battle than of a prolonged war. At the close of each day the warriors return to their respective camps, discuss the events of the day, and agree as to the tactics of the morrow. At first the side of Duryozana is successful, owing principally to the prowess of Fishma.

The position of Fishma is a very peculiar one. He was the only son and heir of Santanu, the former king. Santanu, however, fell in love with the daughter of the King of the Fishermen. Her father refused to allow his daughter to marry Santanu, unless the kingdom should pass to her children. This, however, Santanu refused to promise, for he was mindful of his son Fishma's rights. Santanu, disappointed of his bride, became sick from love, and pined away. The cause of his grief became known to Fishma, who then went to the King of the Fishermen, and promised that he would waive his claim to the throne, on condition that the maid his father loved should be given to him.

"I can believe *you*," replied the girl's father; "but should you ever marry, and have children, how do I know that your sons will not claim it?"

"Then," said Fishma, "I promise never to marry, so that no son of mine may stand in the way of your daughter or of her children."

Upon this the father consented to give his daughter to Santanu. From this union was born a son, who was married to two wives. The young king died early, but a posthumous son was born to each of his

wives, and from these two sprang the race of the Kuruings and the Panduings. The young children, and their sons again, were brought up by their uncle Fishma, and the two leaders of the rival armies were equally related to, and beloved by, this grey-headed hero. Other complications make the relationship of Fishma a still closer one, but the foregoing is sufficient to show the difficult position in which he was placed. Though his age must have been great, he was still the bravest warrior of the two armies. He who had taught the chiefs of either side how to use their weapons was still invincible. At first he endeavoured to arrange matters between the two cousins, so that the dreadful consequences of a civil war might be avoided. The side he at length declared for was that of Duryozana, but all his speeches in favour of peace were rejected by the fiery young spirits who assembled in the council chamber. One of these chieftains, by name Karna, plays afterwards a most prominent rôle. He appears as the most gifted and the most brilliant of all the Kuruing warriors. Karna's birth is wrapped in mystery. His childhood was protected by a charioteer, but it was alleged that this was Karna's fosterfather only, who had found the

child, and then brought him up. Karna is said to have been born with a golden breastplate and rings of gold in his ears, which possessed the virtue of making the wearer invulnerable, and which caused most people to think that a child born with such divine gifts could have no base or ignoble parentage. Karna replies to Fishma's speech in favour of peace, by insinuating that he is jealous of the younger chieftains, and that he fears that in a conflict their younger deeds will outshine his now weakened valour. To this Fishma retorts, that so unworthy a remark proves the author of it to be a base-born churl, and adds such words of biting sarcasm that Karna loses his temper, and vows that he will never more fight with Fishma, and that as long as that veteran commands the army of Duryozana, he will remain in the camp. Besides this, he declares that he has been so insulted at Duryozana's council table, that unless the king himself comes to him and entreats him to do so, he will not fight at all, whether Fishma is in the field or no. With this he leaves the council and withdraws to his own encampment, where for some days he remains in a state of sulkiness. In the meantime the daily conflict goes on, and Fishma is invincible.

The love, however, which he has for the royal house, of which the members are Panduings equally as Kuruings, induces him to spare the chiefs of Yuzishtara's forces, and to confine his slaughter to the lower ranks. Nor is he prevented in this : the Panduings know the prowess of his arm ; nor do any of them, like Karna, affect to despise him. They are only too glad to be treated leniently by him, and, aware of the division in the Kuruing camp, they resolve to wait until some fortunate chance removes Fishma before they engage with Karna.

Duryozana, in the meantime, is disappointed with Fishma's clemency. He can understand the reason of it, but he feels that as long as the chiefs of the Panduings are spared, there is but little hope of victory being complete. He accordingly resolves to conciliate Karna, who after Fishma, is the mightiest warrior in his army, and who was actuated by less humane motives than the veteran. Duryozana therefore humbles himself so far as to go in state to Karna's tent, and to implore him again to take an active part. Karna receives him kindly, acknowledges the honour paid him, but states that, bound by his vow, it is impossible for him to resume his sword as

long as Fishma is still in the field. He promises, however, that if on the morrow Duryozana will persuade Fishma to give to him (Karna) the command of the army, and himself to remain in the camp during the day, he will take a part in the fighting, and endeavour to kill as many of the opposing heroes as possible. Duryozana accordingly proceeds to Fishma's tent and makes him this proposal, and tells him also the reason why he wishes him to accept it. As might be supposed, Fishma is deeply wounded by the proposed change, and in order to clear himself from the suspicion of being lukewarm to his prince's cause, he declares that on the morrow he will spare none, that he will avoid no hero, and that he will destroy as many of the Panduing chiefs as come in his way. With this Duryozana is obliged to be contented, and retires full of anxiety as to what the next day's fight will bring forth. Before he goes, however, Fishma makes one exception. He states that he will not fight with Shiandia under any circumstances whatever, because it was generally supposed that Shiandia was a woman, whose sex had by divine interference been changed. He tells his reasons for crediting this rumour, and the story which follows forms one of the

many interesting episodes of the poem, but which I shall abstain from introducing here.

In the meantime, the Panduings have not been idle. They knew of Fishma's reluctance to meet Shiandia, and Krishna had devised a stratagem by which this reluctance might be made use of. Krishna plays the part of a Ulysses throughout the poem. He is the charioteer of Ardshuna, the principal of the Panduing heroes. He is always ready with some wily device, by which not only his master but also the whole army benefits.

Throughout the poem, the charioteers take a very prominent part. They are not so much their masters' servants as their companions, friends, and advisers. On their skill in driving depends, in a great measure, the success or defeat of their masters. A false turn of the reins would leave the warrior exposed, whereas skill and presence of mind in taking advantage of any mishap or bad driving of the opponent would render his success more easy. The stratagem of Krishna was as follows:—His master, Ardshuna, should go into the fight in Shiandia's chariot, and with Shiandia's banner. He should endeavour to meet Fishma, and when the latter should refuse to defend himself against

the man he supposed to be but an unsexed woman, Ardshuna was to take advantage of his defencelessness, and shoot him dead with his arrows. Krishna's advice was adopted; Ardshuna put on Shiandia's disguise, and went forth to meet Fishma. The meeting took place on the day when Fishma had promised the king that he would spare no one except Shiandia. When he saw the banner of the supposed Shiandia approach, and recognised the chariot and the horses, Fishma threw down his bow and arrows, and contemptuously exclaimed, that Shiandia might shoot as long at him as he pleased, for no woman's hand had strength to hurt his tough old skin with an arrow. The advantage thus offered was eagerly seized. The false Shiandia drew his bow, and discharged at Fishma a volley of arrows, which only too surely hit their mark. Fishma fell headlong from his chariot, exclaiming, "The arrows that have killed me were never shot by Shiandia; they come from the bow of Ardshuna." The chiefs on either side are terrified and delighted at the fall of the veteran Fishma. They hurry up, and the dying hero sees around him all the members of the family he has so faithfully served. With his last breath, Fishma implores the

cousins to forget their unhappy differences, and to put an end to the war, which can only end in their mutual ruin. Duryozana is moved by his words, and after the hero has breathed his last, he offers Yuzishtara the half of the kingdom he had won from him at that fatal game of dice.

“What!” exclaims Yuzishtara, “shall I take the half of what now lies wholly in my grasp? The chief of your heroes is dead, and I shall gain an easy victory. I will have the whole or none.”

Duryozana, of course, refuses such terms as these; the passions of both sides are again excited to the utmost, and the two armies withdraw to their respective camps to consult upon the tactics of the morrow.

The Panduings now feel that their arms have a better chance of meeting with success; but still, though Fishma is slain, there remains the redoubtable Karna, who is not only a mighty warrior, but is also said to be invulnerable, because of the breastplate and rings of gold with which he was born. The mother of Ardshuna feels that the meeting between him and her son is full of danger to the latter, and she resolves to try what a woman's voice can do to

prevent it; for she fears that, now Fishma is dead, this meeting is inevitable. Accordingly, she goes by stealth to Karna's tent, and tells him a long story, the upshot of which is, that, when in her youth, she had an amour with the God of the Sun, and that he, Karna, was the offspring of this amour. To hide her shame, she had exposed Karna (with the golden breastplate and rings in which he had been born), where he was afterwards found by the charioteer, who adopted and brought him up. After this, she married Ardshuna's father, and now she implored Karna, since he was in reality Ardshuna's brother, to refrain from meeting him, lest by any chance he should become a fratricide. Karna refuses to believe this story. He fancies that she knows that the Sun God is his protecting deity, and has therefore fabricated this legend, in order to avert the conflict with her son. Whether her story be true or not, he resolves to reject a mother who had been so unnatural as to expose her son, and Ardshuna's mother retires from his tent disappointed in her hopes.

After this interview, Karna falls asleep, and in a dream the God of the Sun appears to him in the form of a Brahmin, and tells him that Indra, the chief

of the gods, has determined to help the Panduings, and has therefore determined to come to him in the form of a Brahmin, since Karna had once sworn an oath never to refuse a Brahmin any request he might make, and to ask him to give him his breastplate and rings, the possession of which made him invulnerable to the Panduings' arrows. The Sun God advises Karna to give these, but tells him in return to ask for something, which he mentions, and which Indra will by honour be bound to bestow. Soon after this, a holy-looking Brahmin comes to Karna's tent, reminds him first of the oath to refuse no Brahmin's request, and then asks him to give his golden breastplate and ear-rings. Karna replies that he will do so ; but, in return, he asks the fictitious Brahmin to obtain for him the miraculous spear of Indra, which, whoever it may be thrown by, possesses the power of killing a hundred men, and then of returning to the hand that threw it. Indra, seeing himself discovered, is obliged to grant this request, but does so with this limitation. The spear when thrown shall kill one man only, and that one the man at whom it is aimed ; it shall then return, not to the hand of the thrower, but to Indra himself. Karna accepts the spear on this condition,

and knowing that there is no warrior in the Panduing army that can push him so hard as to compel him to relinquish for it his ordinary weapons, except Ardshuna, resolves to keep this spear until he meets that hero. With this intent, Karna next day takes the field in command of the Kuruing forces.

The Panduings, however, have been informed by their protecting deity, Indra, that the miraculous spear has come into Karna's possession. The wily Krishna, Ardshuna's charioteer, easily persuades his master that it would be madness to meet Karna as long as he owns this spear. Krishna knows the limitation placed by Indra on his loan, and devises a stratagem by which Karna may be deprived of his spear without having used it on Ardshuna. On the following day, when Karna comes into the field, Krishna avoids him; he drives Ardshuna's chariot in an opposite direction, and allows Karna to deal death and destruction among the warriors of lesser mark. Karna is invincible; flushed with success, he fights his way through the Panduing ranks, and allows himself to be overtaken by the evening before he attempts to fight his way back again. This is the moment for which Krishna has been waiting. He

seeks out one of the Panduing heroes, named Gatokatsha. This man was sprung from a giantess, and the episode narrating his birth is interesting. It reminds one of the days of Childe Roland and of the early Christian giantkillers, and it will be found in another portion of this little work. Gatokatsha, by virtue of his descent, possessed certain wonderful powers. During the daytime, he inherited from his father the ordinary powers and qualities of a man; at night, he was endued with the supernatural strength of a giant. During twilight, however, he enjoyed the virtues of both—the sagacity and knowledge of the man, and the superhuman strength of the giant. Him, accordingly, Krishna addresses; reminds him of the power he now possesses, and persuades him to attack Karna. The giant does not know that Karna possesses the wonderful spear, and is delighted with the thought that he will now achieve eternal fame for himself by the destruction of the Kuru hero. He rushes forward to meet Karna, and with little difficulty annihilates those who oppose his way. Karna, however, is surrounded by a band of warriors, some of them his dearest friends, who endeavour to protect him from accident. One of these attempts to oppose

the giant's progress, but with a blow from his mace, Gatokatsha kills his chariot horses, and hurls him to the ground. The giant's arm is then raised to deal the death-blow, but Karna is near, and sees his friend's danger. He grasps the first weapon at hand ; it is the spear of Indra, and he casts it at the giant. Gatokatsha falls mortally wounded, but then the spear rises to heaven, and is lost to Karna. After this both armies retire for the night.

Krishna is delighted at the success of his stratagem. The foe his master had most cause to fear is now almost defenceless. His invulnerable armour has been given away, and he has lost the spear he received in return for it. Now or never is the time for the meeting between him and his master. Ardshuna, too, is convinced of this, and determines that on the following day he will meet Karna.

In the meantime, in the Kuru camp, there has been an animated council. The loss of the spear is known, and it is feared that Karna will not be able now to vanquish Ardshuna. Karna, however, tries to console the chiefs. He tells them that though it is true that he has lost his spear and his armour, still he can now meet Ardshuna on even terms, and he

feels confidence that he will be able to conquer, though he is unaided by divine weapons. One request, however, Karna makes. He states that he has not a charioteer so skilful as Ardshuna's servant Krishna, and he fears that in this respect Ardshuna may perhaps be able to gain some advantage; he therefore begs that the King of Madra will guide his chariot, for this prince has the reputation of being most skilful. The King of Madra at first rejects this proposal with scorn. "What!" he exclaimed, "shall I, a king, drive the coachman's son? No; let him drive himself." Urged, however, by Duryozana and the other chiefs, the haughty prince at last consents, but does so with a bad grace, and with a bosom full of wrath and jealousy.

The eventful morning at last dawns, and Salia, the King of Madra, commences his distasteful task. Karna at first tries to encourage him, and prophesies a victory and fame for both; but Salia retorts by comparing Karna to a jackall, that calls and howls and thinks itself a lion, and tells him that he will now find his level when he meets with Ardshuna, a true hero, a lion. Karna answers kindly, and asks Salia to withhold his criticism until the meeting is

over; but the angry king answers by telling him the often-quoted fable of the crow, which tried to compete with the swans in their flight across the ocean, and likens him to the vain-glorious bird. Stung by this, Karna reproaches Salia with the faithlessness of his nation, and tells him that he is worthy to be king of a people whose women sell their very children for a piece of silver. At this moment Ardshuna's chariot approaches, but Salia, whose passion boils over at Karna's last taunt, pulls the reins on one side, and the wheels of the chariot stick in the bog. Karna shed tears of mortification at this ignominious meeting which he had looked forward to with such longing, and springing from the chariot, he exclaims to Ardshuna:

“I know, noble prince, that you are too honourable to take an unfair advantage even of a foe. Stay therefore a moment your hand until I lift this wheel from the mire, and then we will resume the fight like generous enemies!” Without waiting for an answer, he flings aside his bow, puts his shoulder to the wheel, and heaves at the motionless chariot. But, alas! he had confided too far. The valiant Ardshuna could not resist the temptation of a resistless enemy.

When Karna's back was turned, he seized his bow, and despatched an arrow at him. The arrow wounded, but not fatally, and Karna, enraged at his opponent's unfaithfulness, seized in his turn his bow, and sent an arrow at Ardshuna, which not only struck home, but brought down the Kuru warrior to the bottom of his chariot. Thinking there was yet time to draw out his chariot, Karna, disdaining to hit a fallen enemy, again put his shoulder to the wheel. Ardshuna, however, recovers quickly (healed by some magic of his charioteer), grasps his bow once more, and shoots Karna this time in the back. Karna falls, fatally wounded, and the valiant Ardshuna remains the victor. The death of Karna is the signal for the defeat of the Kurus. The most are cut to pieces, and only a few manage to escape. Amongst these is Duryodana, the leader. He escapes on horseback, but, wearied and spiritless, he falls from his horse into a pool of water. Hidden by the rushes, he remains there the whole night, but is found the next morning by Yuzishtara and the principal surviving chiefs of the Pandus. Duryodana challenges any of the heroes present to single combat with the mace, and Yuzishtara appoints Fimasa as his champion, and

agrees to abide by the issue of the combat, and consents that the victor be considered the conqueror in the war. This is by far the most chivalrous proposition that Yuzishtara makes throughout the poem, but is at the same time a very foolish one, for he has everything to lose and nothing to win in such a conflict. By those who surround him, and especially by Krishna, is this concession greatly disapproved, for Duryozana has the reputation of being a master with the weapons to be used. The duel, however, commences, and at first Duryozana appears likely to succeed. He succeeds in beating his opponent on his knees, but then Krishna, who appears to be his backer, whispers in Fimasa's ear, that in the next encounter he should strike Duryozana on the legs. A stroke of this kind was considered unfair, but Fimasa adopts the advice notwithstanding. A blow from his heavy mace breaks both of Duryozana's legs, and Yuzishtara remains the undisputed conqueror, whilst the unfortunate Duryozana is left on the field to die.

Three of Duryozana's chiefs still survive, and they resolve to try a night attack upon the Panduings, when the latter, flushed with victory, are overpowered.

by sleep and wine. The attack is carried out, but, owing to Krishna's vigilance, is defeated, though most of the Panduing chiefs are slain. Here the interest of the narrative stops, and though the poem continues for some length, it merely records the somewhat prosy reflections of the survivors.

The narratives which follow are a few of the many interesting episodes told to each other by the warriors in the intervals of the fight, or in the council-chamber in the camp. Of their true poetical spirit there can be no doubt, and my only misgiving is, whether the dress in which they now appear is sufficiently worthy of the originals. I ask, however, for the reader's indulgence, since my wish is to render more known, and therefore more admired, some gems of ancient Hindoo poetry, of which many know the names, but few are acquainted with the substance.



II.

SANTA:

AN EPISODE OF THE MAHÁBHÁRAT.

—o—

IN Anga's land there lived a king,
Lamopada by name ;
His good deeds many minstrels sing,
And wide is known his fame.
The sacrifices duly made
By holy Brahmin priest,
The king, neglectful, left unpaid,
When finished was the feast.
Hence all the Brahmins of the land
Resolved to leave the king,
To take no presents from his hand,
No more his praises sing.

And with the Brahmins, when they went,
A blessing went away,
The favour which the gods had lent
Forsook the land that day.
No more was seen the smoke arise
From altar's sacred fire ;
No more the pious hermit wise
With prayers the gods did tire.
And since the gods no worship found,
Since none for grace did sue,
The angry gods did curse the ground,
Their bounteous gifts withdrew.
No longer fell the blessed rain,
Nor gentle heaven's dew,
Which erst unto the thirsty grain
Did life and strength renew.
And now the fields, once fair and green,
Were dry and arid sand ;
No waving crops of corn were seen,
No juicy pasture land.
At length his chiefs and sages wise
The king resolved to call,
To hear what measures they'd advise,
Lest ruin should befall.

But when they came, each summoned chief
A different counsel gave,
And none was found to give relief
From dearth the land to save.
At length a chief, both old and wise,
Stood up before the king,
And said—"O prince ! what I advise
Perchance some help may bring.
As long as all the Brahmin priests
From this our land retire,
Whilst none now hold our sacred feasts
Or light the altar's fire ;
So long, I fear, there'll be no rain,
No gentle heaven's dew,
Nor ought that to the thirsty grain,
Can life and strength renew.
But, since the Brahmins here refuse
To hold a sacred feast,
We must our best endeavours use
To get some other priest.
Far off from here, in lonely shrine,
A Brahmin saint does dwell ;
No men disturb his thoughts divine,
Or haunt his quiet cell.

And with him in the forest green
There dwells his only son,
Who hitherto one man has seen—
His sire that only one.
No other food the boy has known
But roots that ripen wild ;
Save water from the spring alone
No drink his lips defiled.
Of woman's love or woman's wile
This simple boy knows nought,
And hence the prize of woman's smile
Has never known or sought.
Then send a maiden to the grove
To wile the lad away,
To lure him here by show of love
In this our land to stay.
For when his foot first greets our soil,
Believe me, noble king,
A thousand showers at once will fall,
And thousand blessings bring.”
Thus spake the sage.—The king, right glad,
Then promised high renown
Unto the maid who 'd lure the lad
To come unto their town.

But still unto this task so sweet
No maiden did aspire,
For though they longed the boy to greet
They feared his holy sire.
Time passed, and famine, want, and dearth
Made ravage far and near ;
No fruit brought forth the parched-up earth,
And all began to fear.
One day the king's own daughter fair,
Sweet Santa, lovely maid,
The lotus-eyed, of waving hair,
Unto her father said,—
“ My father, grant that I may try
To save from want our town,
And bring this Brahmin youth so shy,
Who nought of man has known.”
Right gladly did the king consent,
And then a ship prepared,
In which unto the grove they went
By son and father shared.
And as they went upon the way
Sweet Santa now was told,
Both what to do and what to say
In this her errand bold.

* * * * *

Wifandaka, the hermit grave,
Had left his cell one day,
To find some gloomy rocky cave
Where he alone might pray.
His guileless son, young Rishasri,
Whilst wandering near the stream,
At once a novel sight did see,
As 't were a beauteous dream ;
For, tripping o'er the grassy green,
Sweet Santa smiling came,
Who, blushing, stopped when she was seen,
And then addressed his name.

SANTA.

“ Sweet youth, I've come to visit thee—
How goes thy penance, say ?
And hast thou fruits, O Rishasri,
To eat from day to day ? ”

RISHASRI.

“ O glorious vision, bright and rare !
I worship at thy feet ;
These roots I give, these blossoms rare,
My heavenly guest to greet.”

SANTA.

“This water and these luscious fruits
From my own grove I’ve brought ;
They’re nicer than thy common roots ;—
Taste, gentle youth ; fear nought.”

RISHASRI.

“To heavenly guests strict worship show,
My father oft has said ;
Hence, heavenly youth, I worship low,
And meekly bow my head.”

SANTA.

“Nay, gentle boy ; not so, I pray,
Nor worship at my feet ;
To thee I fain would greeting pay
As in our grove we greet.”

Then, bending low, with winning grace,
She pressed him to her breast,
And fondly kissed the glowing face
Which on her cheek did rest.
And, blushing then with maiden shame,
She left him in the wood,

Nor stopped until at last she came
To where her father stood.
Just then Wifandaka returned
From praying in the cave ;
Fresh holy sayings he had learned,
His face was stern and grave.
For blessing or for cruel vow
Right ready were his lips,
His matted hair was hanging now
Down to his finger tips.

WIFANDAKA.

“ Why art thou idling here, my son ?
Long falls the evening shade ;
Thy daily duties are not done,
Or offerings duly made.
And why this wondering, wandering look,
This scattered, restless air ?
Hast thou perused the holy book,
And duly said thy prayer ? ”

RISHASRI.

“ A hermit youth, with plaited hair,
Was here a little while,

Dark were his eyes, his face was fair,
His mouth did sweetly smile.
As when the bul-bul sings in May,
His gentle voice did sound ;
Like spicy winds on summer's day
Sweet scent did him surround.
He would not eat of these our roots,
He said they were not good ;
But gave to me some luscious fruits
He 'd brought from his own wood.
Some water, too, he gave to me,
Which tasted, Oh, so sweet !
Which, when I drank, I seemed to see
The ground move at my feet.
And then his round and dimpled arm,
Around my neck did twine ;
And when I felt his breath so warm
He pressed his lips to mine.
And, as they met, they seemed to make
A sound quite strange and queer,
A shudder then my limbs did shake,
But not, I think, from fear.
I long to see this youth again,
To greet him thus once more ;

Since he has gone I feel a pain
I never felt before.
The penance which this boy has learnt
Seems nicer far to me
Than sacrifice on altar burnt,
As here I learn with thee."

WIFANDAKA.

"My son, my son, such forms as these
The devils often take,
And whilst our outward eyes they please
Our inward faith they shake."

With that the hermit hurried off,
Burning with holy rage,
To find the fiends who'd made a scoff
Of his pure hermitage.
But scarce the sage did disappear,
When, tripping through the wood,
Sweet Santa softly did draw near
To where Rishasri stood.
And when she saw the simple boy,
She smiled a smile so sweet,
Whilst he was trembling o'er with joy
That they again should meet.

“ With thee,” he cried, “ will I return,
And learn thy penance dear ;
But haste thee, lest my father stern,
Should come and find us here.”

And so she led him to the ship,
But on the way I wis,
Sweet Santa, with her ruddy lip,
Gave him full many a kiss.

And then they journeyed fast away,
To reach fair Anga’s land,
And happy was the king that day
Their keel first touched the strand.

But when Rishasri touched the soil,
As had been said before,
A thousand showers at once did fall,
And plenteous rain did pour.

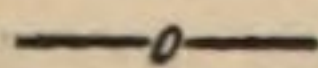
Sweet Santa then, so bright and fair,
And this young guileless boy,
Were made a happy married pair
And all the land had joy.

But when the sage returned and found
His son had fled away,
With pious rage his teeth he ground
And cursed the fatal day.

And then on foot he travelled forth
To find his truant son,
And vengeance swore with holy wrath
For what the king had done.
For many a day he now did toil
Fair Anga's land to gain,
Which, when he reached, the parched-up soil,
Was moist with bounteous rain.
The fields, all golden with their crops,
He saw on every side,
Whilst lowing herds and bleating flocks
Fed o'er the pasture wide.
And in each village he passed through
He heard a happy throng,
Of joyous men and maidens too,
Peal forth a thankful song.
At length he asked what was the name
Of him that wrought this good,
From whom it was these blessings came,
This rich and plenteous food.
Each man he asked at once replied—
The blessings that you see,
The joy that reigns both far and wide,
We owe to Rishasri.

And always still he heard the same ;
For, when he asked each one,
Each gladly praised and blessed the name
Of his own truant son.
And, as he heard, the angry sage
Was gradually appeased ;
Though still he tried to nurse his rage,
At heart he felt quite pleased.
When many a day he thus had spent,
At length he reached the town,
And straight unto the palace went
With stern and angry frown.
But when he saw his only boy,
And by his side his wife,
Whose gentle faces beamed with joy
And showed their happy life ;
And when he looked and saw around
The rich and fruitful land,
Of thankful voices heard the sound,
He raised his trembling hand.
With broken voice he tried to speak,
But, heedless of his oath,
He first kissed Santa's gentle cheek,
And then he blessed them both.

III.

ROHINI; OR, WHY THE MOON CHANGES.

The following is an episode from the Mahábhárat. By Daksha is meant the sun, and by Soma the moon, whilst Rohini is supposed to represent the bright star Aldeboran.

ONCE upon a time the lord of the world, the ruler of all beings, the high and mighty Daksha, bestowed upon Soma, in marriage, twenty-seven of his daughters. Each of these virgins was wondrously beautiful, the eyes of each were large and lustrous, their faces were bright and beaming. Each knew her place in the starry heavens, and they all surrounded their husband the moon, and formed around him a beautiful and sparkling circle. But one among them, the fair Rohini, was even more beautiful than her sisters. She seemed to twinkle and to sparkle at the moon more lovingly than they

did ; and so it happened that the moon loved Rohini more than any other of his wives. He lived only with her, and for her sake he never visited, but neglected her sisters. He found that Rohini was formed after his own heart, and he therefore kept for her all his brightest smiles and beams of joy. But when his other wives saw this, they got very angry, and they all went in a body to their father, and complained to him in these words :—"O our father ! we have come to tell thee that the moon, our husband, no longer loves or cares for us. He devotes himself entirely to Rohini, and for her sake he leaves us alone and neglected. We therefore beg, O father, that thou wilt receive us back again into thy house, where we will spend our time in fasting and in penance, and in mourning for the wrong which our husband has done us."

When Daksha heard this he grew somewhat angry, and sent for the moon, and thus addressed him :—

"My son, my son, what is this that thou hast done ? I bid thee to neglect thy wives no more, but to cherish and to love each equally, and to live with all in turns. Shouldest thou fail in this respect thou wilt commit a great sin."

And the moon remained speechless.

Then Daksha turned to his daughters and said :—

“Return, my children, to your duty. I have ordered the ruler of the night, your husband, to spend his time with you all equally, and I doubt not but that he will obey my commands.”

So the daughters of Daksha returned, and dwelt again with the moon ; but he still went on as before—still he neglected them all, for his love to Rohini increased day by day. When the other wives saw that their father’s commands had been disregarded, they were greatly grieved, and they all went a second time to Daksha, and said :—

“Father ! grant, we pray thee, that we may return and live in thy house, for our husband, the lord of the night, has not obeyed thy word ; he loves us not, and still he leaves us neglected and alone.”

When Daksha heard this, he summoned the moon again to him, and said sternly :—

“Moon ! love all thy wives equally, and dwell with each in turn, or else my curse, O shining one, shall fall on thee.”

But the moon cared not for this threat. In his passion for Rohini, he could think only of her, he

could beam for her only, and he cared nothing for her sisters. Then they became very angry with their husband, and jealousy of their favoured sister sank deep into their hearts. So they went for a third time to their father, and said :—

“Our husband, O father, still sets thy commands at defiance, and laughs at thy threats. Rohini alone is loved ; we are neglected, and therefore again we ask thee to take us back into thy house.”

But when Daksha, the lord of the world, heard this, his anger rose high, and in his wrath he cursed the moon, and sent upon him a grievous sickness, so that he grew thinner from day to day. In vain did the once beautiful lord of the night offer sacrifice ; in vain did he weep and mourn ; each night his form, once so round and so lovely, grew smaller ; his beaming face grew less and less, until at last there was left of him but a very small piece.

But whilst the moon in heaven was thus fading away, the plants on earth missed his bright beams. They too, began, to wither and die ; no new herbs or grass sprang up, and the vegetables lost their taste and flavour ; and because the herbs and grass had died, the beasts which fed on them began to die

also ; men had no longer any meat to eat, and they too grew weak and ill. When they saw this, the gods met together and went to the moon, and said to him :—

“Tell us, O moon, why thy form has grown so small that we can now scarcely see thee? Tell us all that has happened, for we will help thee if we can.”

Then the moon told the gods what had happened ; how Daksha had cursed him, and how he had then commenced to grow thinner and thinner, until at last he was reduced to the little piece now left. When the gods heard this they pitied the moon, and then went together to Daksha, whom they thus addressed :—

“Have mercy, O thou ruler of the earth, have mercy upon the moon, and withdraw thy curse, for there is now but a small thin strip of him left, and should he entirely disappear, consider, O mighty one, that the plants upon earth, the beasts, and even the men will die, all life will leave the earth, until at last the gods themselves will pass away. Consider then, O lord of the world, and withdraw thy heavy curse.”

But Daksha, the father of life, replied :—

“ My word once spoken, ye gods, I cannot withdraw. I will, however, under one condition, weaken the effect of my curse. If in the future Soma will live with each of his wives by turn, the sickness with which I have afflicted him shall prevail for one half of the month only. He shall then bathe in the holy stream Saraswati, and from this he shall gain strength, so that for the other half of the month his form shall increase.”

With these words the guider of the world dismissed the gods ; but Soma hurried at once to the banks of the Saraswati, and bathed himself in its waters. But when he came forth from the water he shone with a new brilliancy ; his beams once more shed forth their cooling rays, the grass and the herbs recovered their former strength and flavour, and beasts and men were again refreshed and revived.

Since then the moon has remained faithful to each of seven and twenty wives. With each he remains one day, and then hurries on to the next. The curse of Daksha, however, still weighs upon him, and for one half of the month his form grows daily less ; then, however, he bathes in the waters of the Saraswati,

from which he emerges with renewed splendour, to grow larger from day by day, and as he grows in size, his beams increase in power, until at last he reaches his fullest beauty ; but this state lasts for but one day, for he then begins to pale and fade, until at last he almost disappears.



IV.

SAWITRI.

—o—

IN years that long have passed away,
In India's sunny land,
There lived a king, whose gentle sway
Is praised by minstrel's hand.
Pious he was, and faithful too,
Just, generous, and wise,
And constant to his promise true
He paid his sacrifice.
But yet the king was troubled sore,
And bowed with grief his head ;
As years rolled on he craved still more
A child to bless his bed.
To Sawitri, high Siva's spouse,
To grant his life's desire,

At length he paid his fervent vows
With sacrificial fire.
For full five days he ate no food,
And then a scanty dish ;
While many thousand altars wooed
The goddess to his wish.
And thus in holy penance he
Lived on for eighteen years,
And then, appeased, high Sawitri
Gave heed unto his tears.
“Thy constant vow, O Prince,” she said,
“Thy altar’s frequent fire,
The pure unspotted life thou’st led,
Have gained thy heart’s desire.
I grant thy wish, whate’er it be,
A boon thou mayest crave ;
Speak, therefore, O Aswapati,
And say what thou wouldst have ;
But choose not what is wrong to give
Or ’gainst thy duty to receive.”

ASWAPATI.

“For children all these vows I pay,
O thou of beaming face ;

Grant children, goddess, sons who may
Maintain my ancient race.
Give sons my funeral rites to pay,
As fits my kingly line,
For this is, so the Brahmins say,
A duty called divine."

SAWITRI.

"That this thy wish, full well I know,
And therefore for this grace
Did I to Brahma's goodness sue
Before I left his face.
Hear, then ; his pitying love
Gives thee a daughter fair—
No more ; nor try his wrath to move
With still unceasing prayer."

"So let it be," the monarch said,
"Let time fulfilment bring."
The goddess vanished then and fled,
And home returned the king.
Nine weary months passed by, and he
Still ruled with loving care,
And then his spouse, chaste Malawi,
Brought forth a daughter fair.

Each needful ceremony now
The joyful monarch paid ;
And, since Sawitri heard his vow,
Sawitri called the maid.
Each year that now so quickly passed
Bestowed on her new grace ;
To maidenhood she ripened fast,
And lovely was her face.
Her rounded form, her slender waist,
Her eyes so soft and mild,
Proclaimed that one so rarely graced
Must be a heaven-born child.
But, blinded by her beauty's glow,
For all her lotus eyes,
None asked the monarch to bestow
As wife this dainty prize.
One day an ointment rich she spread
Upon her silken hair,
And to the gods with bended head
She offered blossoms fair.
Then, picking blooming flowers of spring,
Though none than her more sweet,
She went and gave them to the king,
And touched her father's feet.

Still stood she then with folded hands,
In all her beauteous grace,
And he her longing understands,
And reads her pleading face.
But whilst she stood so passing fair
The king felt sorrow rise,
That none had wooed this maiden rare,
Nor claimed this lovely prize.

THE KING.

" 'Tis time, my child, that thou wer't wed,
But no one claims thy vows ;
Go, then, and by thy wishes led
Choose thou a loving spouse.
' The sire who gives not his daughter away,
The husband who loves not his wife,
The son who's no longer the widow's stay,
Neglectful to cherish her life.'
These three, we read in Menu's laws
(And Brahmins tell the same),
Of Brahma's anger are the cause,
Each equally to blame.
Then haste thee, daughter, find and choose
A husband good and fair,

Lest favour Brahma should refuse
And we his anger share."

Thus spake the king, and further said
What chiefs should form her train ;
Whilst she, the fair one, bowed her head
And blushed with maiden shame.
With sages grave, and maidens gay,
In chariots of gold,
Sawitri hastened on her way,
Midst shouts from young and old.
From grove to grove, from shrine to shrine,
They wandered o'er the land,
Saw Brahmin saints, old men divine,
Nor came with empty hand.

.
One day great Nara from above
Came down the king to see,
For e'en the gods were forced to love
The good Aswapati.
Then as they spoke Sawitri came
From travelling through all lands,
And bowing low with maiden shame,
She stood with folded hands.

NARADA.

“Where went, O king, this maiden shy,
And whence returns she now?
And long ere this, pray tell me why
She paid no nuptial vow?”

ASWAPATI.

“This was the cause, O god-like friend,
That took the timid maid;
But deign thy gracious ears to bend,
And hear the choice she’s made.”
Thus warned, with bashful accents she
Proclaimed the choice of Sawitri.

SAWITRI.

“Long since there ruled o’er Salwa’s land
A king both true and kind,
Who, sorely struck by fortune’s hand,
Became, when old, quite blind.
This was the fault, and this alone
(When still his son a child),
That drove the good king from his throne,
A king both wise and mild.

Now, dwelling in a distant grove,
Live father, mother, son—
Satjavat is the man I love,
My heart and his are one.”

NARADA.

“Alas ! O king, I fear that she
An evil choice has made ;
I would that thou, fair Sawitri,
That word hadst left unsaid.
For words of truth they have a name,
The mother and the sire ;
Satjavat, hence, the only name
Their offspring did acquire.”

ASWAPATI.

“But tell me, Nara, is he brave,
A loyal kingly one ?
And is he patient, wise, and grave,
Jumatsa’s only son ?”

NARADA.

“As glorious as the orb of day,
Wise as Wahasapati,

As brave as Indra, so they say,
And patient too is he."

ASWAPATI.

"Say, is his word a truthful one,
Like all his truthful race?
Is generous Jumatsa's son,
And handsome, too, in face?"

NARADA.

King Rantideva's liberal hand
Was close compared with his,
And none there is through all the land
So pious as he is.
Yayâty was a noble one,
But not so good as he;
And beauteous is Jumatsa's son
As beauty e'er can be."

ASWAPATI.

"Of good men this one seems the chief,
Puts all on earth to shame;
So tell me, then, what caused thy grief,
What point in him to blame?"

NARADA.

“Alas ! in every virtue chief,
Satjavat has one blot,
And this it is that caused my grief ;
No power can change his lot.
In just a year from this sad day
(His fate is fixed and sure),
His youthful life must pass away,
His voice be heard no more.”

ASWAPATI.

“Sawitri ! hear thy cruel fate—
A fate that alters not—*
Go hence and choose another mate,
Thou canst not change his lot.
Great Narada, of gods the friend,
Has told you here to-day,
How, when another year will end,
His life must pass away.”

SAWITRI.

“ ‘The heritage but *once* divide,
But *once* betroth the maid ;

* The lot of a widow in India, it will be remembered, is an especially hard one.

Nor can a gift, whate'er betide,
Be given twice,' 'tis said ;
If short or long should be his life,
In virtues rich or poor,
I've chosen once to be his wife,
I choose but once, not more.
When once the heart has chosen true,
When spoken is the word,
'Tis time at once the act to do,
Nor counter voice he heard."

NARADA.

"O worthy prince, thy daughter's vow
Is fixed, and, I'm afraid,
By no persuasions will she now
Renounce the choice she's made.
Since Satjavat is then the best,
In virtues richest one,
'Twere well to do the maiden's hest,
And take him for thy son."

The king replied—"I hear thy word,
And will obey. Thou art my lord."

NARADA.

“Then haste thee, Prince, the marriage on,
And now farewell my friend ;
My blessings on you ; I return,
My visit here must end.”

With that Narada left the king
And to the gods above took wing.

.
Each rite performed with loving care,
And gifts with freedom spent ;
They chose a day with omens fair,
With priests and Brahmins went.
At last they saw the lonely wood
Where blind Jumatsa dwelt ;
On foot the king then meekly stood,
Around his followers knelt.

Reclining on a rustic bed
They saw the blind old man ;
On kushoo grass was laid his head,
His cheek was pale and wan.
With reverential homage now,
As one who knew his fame,
The king drew near, and bowing low,
Proclaimed aloud his name.

The guest gift to the welcome guest
The old man reached, and drew
Him to a seat, where welcome rest
His weary limbs might woo.

JUMATSA.

“Now tell, I pray, my honoured friend,
What brings thee to this grove,
Where I am forced my life to spend,
And with me those I love?”

ASWAPATI.

“My only child, sweet Sawitri,
A maiden chaste and fair,
As daughter, Prince, I bring to thee,
Let her thy exile share.”

JUMATSA.

“But think, O king, the gentle child
Was in a palace reared ;
Our forest here is dark and wild,
The jungle thick and weird.
In penance strict our simple life
Goes on from day to day ;

Can the fair girl, when once a wife,
Such rigid rules obey?"

ASWAPATI.

"This, honoured sage, we've duly weighed,
My daughter dear and I,
And, knowing this, her choice is made
With thee to live and die.
In friendship, Prince, I come to thee,
Change not my hope to fear;
But grant that what I wish may be—
The wish that brought me here.
My equal thou; like thee a life
I live from pious heart;
Take then my daughter as the wife
Of virtuous Satjavat."

JUMATSA.

"To be, O king, with thee allied
Was a long wish of mine;
But, exiled and alone, I sighed,
'Such joy can ne'er be thine!'
And now that thou thyself hast come,
And thou my wish dost share,

I take thy daughter to my home,
Right glad of prize so rare."

The hermits and the sages all
Were summoned, and the priest
Commenced, obedient to their call,
The holy marriage-feast.

Rich bridal gifts and jewels rare
The king right gladly spent ;
And, blessing then the happy pair,
Back to his city went.

And now Satjavat with his wife,
The virtuous, the fair—

She who had sacrificed her life,
Sweet nuptial joys did share.

But Sawitri, with wife-like pride,
With no regret or frown,
Her dress and jewels laid aside,
Went clad in russet gown.

For all she had a gentle word,
Which showed her loving life,
And all who of her actions heard
Did love the virtuous wife.

She tended both her parents too
With every loving care,
That soon their love she gladly knew
She with their son did share.
Charmed with her wit and winning grace,
Her chaste and gentle mind,
Her husband blessed her lovely face,
Her eyes so true and kind.
But as each month flew quickly by,
Her mind was filled with fear,
That he, her loved one, soon would die,
For soon the time drew near.
Each day, each hour, she counted now,
And when four days were due,
She said that she had vowed a vow
A penance hard to do.
Fasting for three long days to stand,
A solemn vow she'd made,
And motionless, a foot or hand,
She would not move she said.
In vain did blind Jumatsa try
To swerve her from her oath ;
She heeded not her husband's sigh,
But firmly answered both.

SAWITRI.

“Oh ! honoured ones,” replied the maid,
“Urge not to break my vow ;
To gain a wish ’twas duly made ;
I must fulfil it now.”

JUMATSA.

“That thou a solemn oath shouldst break
For me to say is wrong,
Nor will I then thy purpose shake ;
But, oh ! the time is long.”

Then like a statue, but how fair,
She paid her vow of love,
And stood with gentle suffering air,
Nor foot nor hand did move.
But on the third night, weeping, she
Full oft would grieving sigh,
“O God ! to-morrow’s sun must see
My dearest husband die.”
And who the anguish keen can say
Of this sweet mourning one,
When in the east the dawn’s first grey
Proclaimed the rising sun ?

But first before the sun could rise
An offering she made,
And strictly, though with weeping eyes,
Each morning duty paid.
And then before each hermit grave
There dwelling in the wood,
As one who would a blessing crave,
With folded hands she stood.
Well pleased, each holy man complied,
A word of blessing gave—
“From widow’s sorrows,” each one cried,
“May gods above thee save!”
“As thou hast said, so may it be,”
To each she gladly said;
And from this omen Sawitri
With hope her bosom fed.
Jumatsa now she chanced to meet,
And thus he greeting made—
“’Tis time, my daughter, thou shouldst eat;
Thy vow is duly paid.”

SAWITRI.

“I pray thee, honoured father, nay,
The time’s not come as yet,

I eat no food throughout the day
Until the sun has set."

And as she spoke Satjavat passed,
An axe upon his arm ;
Towards the wood he hurried fast,
Nor saw his wife's alarm.

"Satjavat, let me go with thee,"
She cried in pleading tone ;
"For without thee I cannot be,
Nor here remain alone."

SATJAVAT.

"Far is the forest I must seek,
A dreary place and wild,
And now with fasting thou art weak ;
How canst thou go, my child ?"

SAWITRI.

"I am not weak, my husband dear ;
Oh, let me go with thee !
'Tis much I'd grieve with anxious fear
If thou alone shouldst be."

SATJAVAT.

“Were she but strong, right glad I’d be
If by my side she came ;
But ask my parents, lest on me
Perchance should fall the blame.”

With reverence then she humbly stood,
And said, “O honoured pair,
My husband here goes to the wood,
And I his toil would share.
I grieve from him apart to be,
But still I dare not ask
That he should stop at home with me
And thus avoid his task.
The wood he cuts is meant to burn
Upon the altar’s fire,
And should he from his purpose turn
’Tis I would blame acquire.
For near twelve months I here have been,
Nor seen the world outside ;
I fain would see the forest green
In all its summer pride.”

JUMATSA.

“Methinks, good wife, that Sawitri
No boon has asked as yet;
We’ll grant the wish upon which she
Has seemed her heart to set.”

Then with a smile upon her face,
Though grieving sore at heart,
She followed with a winning grace
Her husband Satjavat.
And he from time to time turned round
To speak a loving word,
While she his tender voice’s sound
With fond affection heard.

SATJAVAT.

“Beloved one! see the glorious wood,
With all its charming bowers;
See here this brook, the foaming flood,
And all the blooming flowers.”

But though she looked, she passed them by,
She looked alone at him;

And as she thought "he soon must die,"
With tears her eyes grew dim.
But now his axe Satjavat took,
Felled many an ancient tree,
Until at last his strong arm shook,
And trembling was his knee.
And then to Sawitri he said,
"I am not well, my best !
A throbbing pain is in my head,
A little while I'll rest."
Then, pillowed in her gentle arms,
His head did softly lie ;
But she was filled with fond alarms
That now her love must die.

LAST WORDS.

When those we love have sunk to rest,
A dull dead feeling fills the breast ;
But still the heart that's nearly broken
Loves to recall the last words spoken ;
To feel again and understand
That last fond pressure of the hand ;
To read again the eyes which, failing,
Told, " Love lives yet, though life is paling."
To mourning hearts this is relief ;
But keener far is felt the grief,

When those last words, Love's last sweet token,
Are by the lost one left unspoken.
As smiling dawn joins night to day,
The last smiles o'er a face which play
Bridge o'er the gulf so widely yawning,
Bid those who grieve hope for the morning.—

Too true, alas ! Sawitri feared,
For now, in shining light,
A dazzling god-like form appeared
In armour shining bright ;
A diadem was on his head,
And in his hand a rope,
His skin was dark, his eyes were red,
Nor gave who saw him hope.
Then laying down her husband's head,
With folded hands she stood—
“Who art thou, god-like man ?” she said,
“What wouldst thou in the wood ?”

YAMA.*

“Hear, then, Sawitri, fair and good,
Thou faithful loving wife,

* Yāma is the god of death, and is supposed to live in the south.

I've come to this dark, gloomy wood
To take thy husband's life."

SAWITRI.

"They say that errands such as now
Thy *messengers* perform;
Then why, O god of death, hast thou
Appeared in thine own form?"

YAMA.

"'Tis I alone can here prevail,
Against the good and true
My messengers would only fail,
'Tis I the work must do."

Then with his rope he quickly drew
From out Satjava's heart
A man, which o'er his arm he threw,
And straightway did depart.
What 'erst breathed warm and glowing breath
Was cold and senseless clay;
And Yama, the grim lord of death,
Now southwards took his way.

But she, the true and faithful wife,
Went wheresoe'er he led ;
The one she followed when in life
She would not leave when dead.

YAMA.

"Return, Sawitri, to thy home,
The funeral rites prepare ;
Far hast thou with thy husband come,
Nor more his path can share."

SAWITRI.

"My duty as a wife I know,
And thou as well as I ;
Hence, wheresoe'r he goes I go,
And where he dies I die.
As I have loved but one till now,
Have been obedient, true ;
As faithfully I kept my vow,
So mercy, Yama, show.
'Who with another five steps goes
Is said to be his friend,'
As friend I speak, her right who knows,
So hear me to the end.

‘ There is no danger to live in the wood
To practice what virtue requires,
For as virtue’s the buckler of the good,
The good man to virtue aspires.
Through the virtue of One (believe good men)
Was the road to salvation acquired ;
Of all things the first is virtue, then,
No second or third is required.’ ”

YAMA.

“ Wise, Sawitri, is this thy word,
Thou good and loving wife,
What boon thou askest shall be heard,
But not Satjavat’s life.”

SAWITRI.

“ Grant to my second father’s eyes,
The gift of sight, the gift we prize.”

YAMA.

“ So shall it be, but now go home,
A long and weary road thou’st come.”

SAWITRI.

“ I weary where my husband is ?
Or where he goes feel pain ?
I follow still, for I am his,
Now hear me once again :
‘ It is need for good men but once to meet,
To know each other well ;
If the meeting alone is then so sweet,
How sweet with such to dwell.’ ”

YAMA.

“ Soul-quickenings is thy every word,
O good and pious wife ;
Ask yet a boon, it shall be heard,
But not Satjavat’s life.”

SAWITRI.

“ Restore my second father’s throne,
The one unjustly lost—his own.”

YAMA.

“ So shall it be, but now I pray,
That homeward thou wilt take thy way.”

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SAWITRI.

“O thou who takest man where he
Alone seeks not to go,
Take pity, Lord, on Sawitri,
Still listen to her woe.
‘Freely, in love, with word and deed
To give to all relief;
To constantly supply each need,
Of good deeds in the chief.
Through fear of man, to gain applause,
The worldly such acts do;
The good man aids a poor man’s cause,
And loves him though a foe.’ ”

YAMA.

“As to the thirsty sounds the wave,
Thy saying sounds, sweet wife;
Another boon thou mayest crave,
But not Satjavat’s life.”

SAWITRI.

“My father has no son to love,
Give him a son his love to prove.”



YAMA.

“So be it, then ; but now go home,
Too far already hast thou come.”

SAWITRI.

“Ah ! wouldst thou bid me to depart,
And leave my husband here ?
'Tis farther still aspires my heart,
Once more, I pray, thee hear.
'None on themselves such trust repose
As on a good man's mind ;
A good man therefore has no foes,
And finds the whole world kind.
A perfect trust is only put
Where truths and faith abound ;
'Tis therefore in a good man's hut
That perfect trust is found.'”

YAMA.

“Such words of truth these ears of mine
Have never heard, sweet wife ;
A fourth wish ask, it shall be thine,
But not Satjavat's life.”

SAWITRI.

“Grant that by children’s honoured name
May be prolonged, Satjavat’s fame.”

YAMA.

“’Tis granted ; but once more I pray,
That thou wouldst homewards take thy way.”

SAWITRI.

“The good man seeks another’s good,
Nor aught seeks in return ;
He seeks it, since he knows he should,
To please the Honoured One.
But still his work is not in vain,
Nor yet unknown his worth ;
A good man can control the sun,
By virtue rule the earth.”

YAMA.

“Whilst words so wise, so good and pure,
I hear, fair one, from thee,
I honour and admire thee more,
Ask what thou wouldst from me.”

SAWITI.

“Of all thy favours this is best,
In this is no alloy ;
Each favour yet lost half its zest,
Now perfect is my joy.
Give back *my* life, *my* soul, *my* bliss,
Give to the pleading wife
The life that makes a heaven of this—
Restore Satjavat’s life.
In granting children to us both,
Thou gav’st this boon before ;
Now, Lord of Justice, by thy oath,
My husband’s life restore !”

“So let it be,” great Yama said,
And from the noose untied
The life which by the rope he led,
And then rejoiced, replied—
“Thy husband, fair one, I restore,
His life I freely give,
For many and many a long year more,
To green old age to live.

Nor shalt thou, sweet one, by his side,
Be lost to future fame,
For children, who shall be thy pride,
Shall bear thy honoured name ;
And brothers, also, thou shalt see,
Wise, valiant, and fair,
Who, sprung from virtuous Malawi,
Her royal name shall bear.”
With that the god rose in the air,
And to the heavens took way ;
But she went joyfully to where
Her husband’s body lay.
There taking up the dear one’s head,
She pressed it to her heart,
And then the life, that erst had fled,
Came back to Satjavat.
He woke, and opening wide his eyes,
He said, with loving tone :
“ Too long I’ve slept ; say, was it wise,
Thus late to sit alone ;
The day has passed, the night has come,
The wood is dark and drear,
And anxious why we ’ve not come home,
Our parents old will fear.

Then haste thee, dear one, though 'tis night,
I trust to find the way,
Helped by a torch's ruddy light,
As if 'twere brightest day."

Satjavat then stood up, and felled
From off a withered tree
A branch, which high aloft he held,
And lit for both to see.

Then on a tree the fruit they put,
To fetch another day,
And looking where each placed the foot,
They homewards took their way.

The axe, to guard them from all harm
Was o'er his right arm flung ;
His left crept round her gentle form,
And o'er her shoulder hung.

Her left hand held the torch on high,
And round his waist her right ;
Thus caring nought for wild beasts' cry,
They went on through the night.

.

But, anxious with the fear of age,
Jumatsa and his wife,

Were fearing in the hermitage
Their son had lost his life,
The Brahmins sat around their king
And made the time less long,
For each some ancient deeds would sing,
Told in heroic song.
Then all at once the blessed light
Came to the blind man's eyes;
And as he looked with perfect sight,
All gazed in mute surprise.
Then as they blessed the gods above,
From whom this boon had come,
Satjavat and his gentle wife
Together both came home.
When these they see, they all begin
To cry aloud with joy—
“Thrice blessed art thou, noble king,
For here returns thy boy ;
And with him comes his gentle wife,
Thine eyes again can see ;
Still further will be blessed thy life,
Still further luck there 'll be.”
Though anxious for reply, they wait
Till both had got a seat ;

But then—"What kept you out so late?
What dangers chanced to meet?
The father and the mother, here,
Lest accident befell,
Were grieving with an anxious fear,
So thy adventures tell."

SATJAVAT.

"Whilst cutting wood I felt unwell,
And laid me down and slept;
'Tis this alone I have to tell,
'Tis this alone me kept."

A BRAHMIN.

"And could it then, by chance, befall
The king again can see?
Sajavat, no! thou know'st not all,
There's more behind must be.
Speak, Sawitri, the fair and good,
(If that thou mayest tell,
What happened in the dreary wood—
Tell all that there befell?"

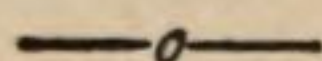
SAWITRI.

“ Since you will have it, I will speak,
So hear ye wise and good
(No praise or plaudits do I seek),
What happened in the wood.
Before I married Satjavat,
I heard great Nara say,
That he I love with all my heart
Must lose his life this day.
The vow you thought so hard to keep,
To me was sweet and fair ;
I fasted, and I took no sleep,
That death *his* life would spare ;
To-day, when wearied, he sought rest,
It happened as I feared,
For as he lay upon my breast,
The god of death appeared,
But though he took his life away,
I followed and implored.
Till he four favours deigned to say,
And then *his* life restored.
And first I asked the king might see,
And next regain his throne ;

And then my mother Malawi,
Fair sons and brave might own ;
Then sons the god gave Satjavat,
From me his loving wife ;
And lastly, when I touched his heart,
He gave me back his life.
This happened in the wood so drear,
And thus was my keen pain,
Changed from a longing anxious fear,
To thankful joy again."

THE BRAHMINS.

"The house, deep sunk in grief and woe,
Thy piety has raised ;
Thy love alone could it renew,
For ever be thou praised.
All worlds shall hear of thy renown,
For ever be thou famed ;
Where'er are wifely virtues known,
Be SAWITRI first famed."

GATOKATSHA'S BIRTH.

WHEN Fim was young, he was travelling with his brothers in search of adventure. One day they came to a shady wood, and there, because the sun was hot and the journey weary, they all lay down to sleep. The wood, however, belonged to a huge giant, named Hidimb, who was in the habit of eating all the men he could catch. The giant, however, had a sister named Hidinia, who was now seventeen years old and unmarried. She was handsome, and if she had not been so big, people would have thought her more so. Just at the time when Fim and his brothers were sleeping in the wood, Hidinia went out to walk. She came to a large banyan tree, which, with its thousand branches, gave a shade from the burning sun, whilst the shoots which fell from the lower boughs to the earth, and there took root, formed beautiful arches where hundreds of men might lie

sheltered from the sun. Here, under a thick covering of leaves, Hidinia saw Fim's brothers stretched out asleep; but Fim, who was as weary as his brothers were, was awake. He had laid himself down to sleep like the rest, but sleep would not visit his eyelids. He kept thinking that perhaps there might be danger in this beautiful wood, and so he resolved to remain awake and watch whilst his brothers slept; and so he laid aside his turban, and his long curly hair fell over his shoulders. Just then Hidinia drew near, and as she saw the beautiful youth her heart warmed towards him with pity and with love. But Fim, startled by her footstep, looked up alarmed, and then he saw the fair giantess beckoning to him. So he went to her, and she said to him, smiling—

“Who are you, fair boy? and who are these who sleep here in this wood as securely as if they were in their mother's house? Do you not know that here there lives a dreadful giant? If my brother Hidimb sees you, you are lost, for he will carry you off to his castle and devour you all. Come, then, with me, sweet youth, and I will save you.”

But Fim answered and said—“How can I leave

my brothers here, whom I ought rather to protect than to desert?"

"Wake them," said Hidinia, "and I will save them also for your sake."

"What," said Fim; "shall I wake my brothers when they are sweetly sleeping from their weary journey, and all because a giant is near? No; I'm not frightened of a giant—let him come."

But scarce had he said this when the heavy steps of Hidimb were heard echoing through the lonely wood. An awful ogre he was to look at. Black as the thunder-clouds on a summer's day was his face. His eyes were yellow, and his beard was red and composed of a few short and stubble-like hairs. His mouth was large, and his open lips showed long sharp teeth which overlapped each other. Hidimb walked on, snuffing the air and smiling savagely to himself, he exclaimed—

"I smell man's meat! It is long that I have tasted a roasted man, a dish I love more than any other." Then he saw his sister, and said "Come, sister, let us find these men. They must be near, for I can smell them. Ah! we'll have a glorious feast to-day of man's meat;" and the ogre licked his lips

with his horrid tongue, and ground his sharp teeth together.

But Hidinia answered—"Nay, brother, I have seen no men, and I have been walking about here the whole day; go home and sleep, and I will look again."

But Hidimb said—"Woman, you lie; I smell man, and a delicious smell it is too"—and again he licked his lips. "Ah, I know; you have hid a man here, and you want to eat him alone, and therefore you say 'go home and sleep.'"

This he said with his eyes full of anger, and began to beat his sister. But Fim then sprang forth from his hiding-place into which he had crept, when he saw the giant coming, and said—

"Hold, cowardly giant; you shall not strike a woman in my presence. Come, fight with me. To-day the vultures shall feed on your gross body, and I will cleanse this wood from robbers, and make it safe for travellers."

But the giant cried with scorn—"You, you little Hop-o'-my-thumb, I will soon settle you;" and he stretched out his hand to catch him. But Fim caught hold of his arm, and pulled the ogre further

into the wood, so that his bellowing voice and the noise of their swords should not wake his brothers. And then they began to fight, and it was like the meeting of two elephants that rush against each with tusks and trunk, and uproot all the trees in their way. But at length Hidimb slipped and fell, and before his huge carcase could recover from the shock of his fall, Fim jumped upon his body and hewed off his mighty head. By this time his brothers had awoke, and coming up they saw the giant's body, and they wondered at Fim's valour, and they embraced and praised him. But Hidinia, who had watched the fight from a distance, now drew near, and folding her hands, she said to Fim—

“O hero; I feel only what a woman can feel when her heart has been conquered. Take pity, mighty one, on me! Reject not my love, for if thou dost, my life is at an end, and I must die of despair.”

When Fim heard this he had pity for the woman, and so he married her, and stopped with her for a year before he went on with his travels. Then these two, the brave youth and the love-sick giantess, wandered together among the woods, and were happy in each other's love. They visited together the gloomy

shades, the bubbling waterfalls, the smiling valleys, and the sweet-smelling groves. And so, after some time a beautiful boy was born to Hidinia, strong and hearty, and they called him Gatokatsha. Then Fim resolved to leave his giant wife, and she remained in the wood and brought up her son. But Gatokatsha grew stronger and stronger, so that none could compete with him. From his father he inherited courage and presence of mind, and from his mother strength and beauty; but because he was sprung from a man and a giantess, by day he was possessed of human virtues, whilst at night he was endued with the super-human qualities of a giant. Only at twilight, when it was neither day nor night, he combined the powers of both.



DASARÂT'S SIN:

AN EPISODE OF THE RAMAYANA.

—o—

KING DASARÂT had two wives, Kausalia and Kekaya, by whom he had two sons : Rama, the elder of the two, by the former ; and Farata by the latter.* When Dasarât grew old, Kekaya, his favourite wife, reminded him of a promise the king had formerly made to her, that he would grant her a request whatever it might be. She then claimed that the king should banish his eldest son Rama, and should, in his place, crown her son Farata as his successor. The old king yields to her entreaties, banishes Rama, and sends for Farata. After Rama's

* He had also a third son by Kekaya ; but as this narrative does not refer to him, his name is omitted.

departure, however, the king feels bitterly the injustice he has done to his eldest son; his love to Farata's mother is changed to hatred and disgust, and he turns to Kausalia for consolation. The night after Rama has gone into banishment, Dasarât wakes, and, grieving for the loss of his first-born, he narrates to Kausalia the following :—

In vain, my wife, I try to sleep,
Grief fills my mourning breast,
My burning eyes can only weep,
And troubled is my rest.
And as I toss upon my bed,
My mem'ry sadly turns
To days of youth, now long since fled,
And conscience in me burns.
For all that happens here on earth
Is our own deeds' desert ;
Our former actions are the birth
Of future joy or hurt.
Who, ere a work he does begin,
Thinks not how it will end,
The name of "fool" will surely win,
His time will vainly spend.

Thus one who sees the amra flower
Thinks that the fruit will be
Perchance but small, perchance but sour,
And fells the modest tree.
He sees instead the gorgeous show
Of the palasa tree,
And thinks where flowers so sweet will grow
The fruit as sweet will be.
But when the harvest time comes on,
He finds, to his dismay,
The fruit he spent his care upon
But fit to throw away.*
Like him am I: in days now fled
I scorned the amra flower,
The palasa I tilled instead,
And now the fruit is sour.
What grief can be so deep or keen
As thus to lose my son,
But this so bitter fruit, I ween,
My early actions won.

* The amra tree has a small and perfumeless flower, but a rich and luscious fruit; whereas the palasa has a gorgeous blossom, but a nauseous fruit.

When I was young I strove to win
An archer's wide-known fame,
And passing by what could be seen,
I aimed at hidden game.
'Twas thus when roaming with my bow
Far in the forest deep,
That, heedless, I the seed did sow
Which now in tears I reap.
Ere yet, dear wife, that you were wed,
Whilst I was still a boy,
One year, when summer's heat had fled,
I felt a hunter's joy.
Then when the rain in softening showers
Had cooled the parched-up ground,
The woods were thronged again with flowers,
With music did resound.
On every side sweet birds were seen
Of every form and size—
The pea-fowl in their glittering sheen,
The birds of paradise.
And clustering thick on many a bough
Of overhanging trees,
The birds their wet wings loosen now
To catch the evening breeze.

And, passing here some open glade,
And there some shady nook,
Is heard the rippling noise that's made
By silvery sounding brook.
On such a day as this, dear wife,
I sallied forth to kill,
To take some savage creature's life,
And prove my vaunted skill.
But as I hurried through the wood,
The sun began to sink ;
'Twas dark before at last I stood
Where wild beasts came to drink.
And as I peered with straining eyes,
My bow strung in my hand,
I thought I heard a gurgling noise,
Some shuffling in the sand.
And, gazing deep into the bush,
A beast I seemed to spy,
So, aiming straight, with whirring rush,
I let my arrow fly.
But scarce my arrow swift had flown,
When from the bush so near,
A human voice, a human groan,
Fell on my anxious ear.

“Alas!” it cried, “what cruel hand
Has struck a hermit low?
Have I a foe in all the land
To deal so hard a blow?
To bring fresh water from the stream
I came when evening fell;
Could I of secret ambush dream,
Or murderer’s hand foretell?
None owes to me an evil turn,
To none my death is gain;
Nor know I one the sin who’d earn
Of helpless hermit slain.
But not so much my death I mourn
As bitterly I grieve
For my old parents left forlorn.
Who can their wants relieve?
For they are blind, the aged pair,
My love their wants supplied,
To cherish them was all my care,
To tend for them my pride.
On them my death will chiefly fall,
On them most hardly lie;
This cruel dart has killed us all,
For they of want will die.”

As horror-struck at first I stand,
The bow I prized so high
Unheeded fell from out my hand ;
I turned, but could not fly.
Bewildered then, like one half-dead
(The darkness all around),
I found a path, which winding led
To whence had come this sound.
There, bleeding on the yellow sand,
I saw a hermit lie ;
A pitcher fallen from his hand
Had rolled away hard by.
And, sticking in the hermit's side,
I saw the fatal dart,
Whilst through a wound there gaping wide
The blood flowed from his heart.
His simple dress, his hermit gown,
His hair, so neat before,
With stains had now discoloured grown,
Of water and of gore.
But, hearing then my deep-drawn sighs,
He started at the noise,
And, turning his reproachful eyes,
He said, with breaking voice :—

“What harm, O prince, did I to thee,
When drawing water here,
That thou shouldst aim thy darts at me,
And take a life so dear?
The arrow which has reached my side,
And pierced through flesh and bone,
Has made two other wounds beside,
Has struck not me alone.
My parents old, a helpless pair,
Both blind, and childless now,
Will miss my kind and fostering care—
On them will fall this blow.
Their sightless orbs perchance they'll strain,
And listen at the door
For steps they'll never hear again,
For voice they'll hear no more.
To me their slightest wish was law,
Their ills for years I've nursed,
This water that I came to draw
Was meant to quench their thirst;
And, longing now for my return,
Both anxiously will wait,
With hunger and with thirst they'll burn,
For now the hour is late.

And, angry too, perchance my sire
Will think I've strayed away ;
And, ignorant, with feeble ire,
Harsh, bitter words may say.
Then, prince, this boon alone I crave,
That thou wilt go and tell
How, guiltless, here I've found my grave,
And say how all befell.
But haste thee, prince, lest ere I die,
Whilst lying bleeding here,
A father's curse should on me lie,
Rob me of heaven so near.
But first draw out this cruel dart,
Which pierces flesh and bone,
Which drains the best blood of my heart,
And wrings full many a groan."
'Twas thus he spoke ; but, trembling, I
Knew scarcely what to do ;
I knew that he must surely die
If once the dart I drew.
Whilst thus he lay in bitter pain,
His limbs half stiff in death,
He turned on me his eyes again,
And said, with gasping breath—

“Fear not, O prince, thou wilt acquire
Of Brahmin's * death the sin,
No twice-born one am I ; my sire
Was born of Veshya's kin.
I do not dread the pain to bear,
For I have nerved my heart ;
Hence hear, O prince, my harmless prayer,
And draw the fatal dart.”
And as he writhed with bitter groan,
By pity I inspired
Drew out the dart, and, with a moan,
Forthwith the lad expired.
One moment more, I weeping stood,
Then, mindful of his hest,
I hurried through the darksome wood
To do his last request.
But first the fallen jug I took,
And filled with anxious care,
With pure fresh water from the brook,
To give the aged pair.

* The Brahmins only are supposed, after death, to be a second time born on earth. To cause the death of a Brahmin is as great a sin as to kill a cow.

But as I reached the hermitage,
And softly did draw near,
I heard two voices weak with age
Speak of their son so dear.
I heard them say—"His fostering care
Our every want supplies ;
A loving son he is most rare,
The light of our old eyes."
I tried to think what speech to say—
Some speech that solace brings,
To these whose prop I'd torn away,
Like birds robbed of their wings.
Just then the sire heard me approach,
And cried with anxious tone—
"Thy tardy steps I would reproach,
Full long we've been alone.
Give me the water here, my son,
My thirst is great to-day ;
I would that quicker thou hadst come ;
Perchance thou staidst to play.
Forget not, son, to us art thou
The helper of the weak,
To sightless eyes the sight art thou ;
But why so silent?—speak !"

And then with faltering lips I told
The deed that I had done;
And as each word I did unfold
With grief my heart was wrung.
And then I told how, ere his death,
He blessed his parents dear,
And spoke of them with his last breath,
For them his only fear.
But when the mournful tale I'd told,
Of how his son had died,
The bitter tears his cheeks down rolled,
And thus at length he cried—
“Hadst thou thyself not come and said
How this sad deed befel,
My curse had fallen on thy head,
To weigh thee down to hell.
If wanton act had done this thing,
The gods themselves would own,
My curse from heaven a god could bring,
E'en Indra lose his throne.
But since by accident it came
That thou didst kill my son,
I will not curse, O prince, thy name
For this that thou hast done.

Though thou hast robbed me of a friend—
Hast slain this son of mine,
Live on in peace, nor with thee end
Thy father's kingly line.
But now, O prince, lead on to where
My dear son's body lies,
That I may breathe a fervent prayer
And close his much-loved eyes."
And so I gave to each a hand,
And then our way we took,
To him who lay upon the sand,
Hard by the fatal brook.
But when at last we had come nigh
To him they loved so dear,
I heard from both a heart-drawn sigh,
And saw a bitter tear.
Tight in his arms the father took
The corpse of his loved son,
His worn old face had that sad look
Of heart with sorrow wrung.
"My son! my son!" the old man cried,
"Speak but one word to me;
My love thou wert, my joy and pride,
Since nursed upon my knee.

Perchance some bitter word I've told,
And hurt my son so kind ;
Forgive it, son, for I am old,
And feeble is my mind.
But if thou still art hurt with me,
Speak to thy mother here ;
Console her grief, her mourning, see
Her frequent bitter tear.
Oh how I loved thy accents sweet,
When, at the evening hour,
Thou didst thy artless prayers repeat
To the Almighty Power.
Who now will bring the tender fruits—
The fruits which we could eat?
Who'll bring the soft and juicy roots,
Or fetch the water sweet?
And who, when evening shades fall deep,
Will nestle to my heart,
And lull my anxious cares to sleep,
Bid sorrow to depart?
And who will feed thy mother here,
This blind and aged one,
Who feared no ill when thou wert near,
Whose pride was in her son ?

Oh stay awhile, my boy ! Oh stay !
And I will go with thee ;
To Yama's goodness I will pray
To give thee back to me.
I'd tell the god of death that thou
Didst cherish our old age,
And sure my prayers his will would bow,
His cruel wrath assuage.
But thou art dead, nor dare I hope
On earth to see thee more ;
Gone is my staff, my help, my prop,
My joy, my life is o'er.
But since the cruel stroke that fell,
Fell on a guiltless head,
Rise thou, my son, where heroes dwell,
Whose blood was nobly shed.
Dwell thou with those who in the fight
Fell foremost in the brunt,
Whose golden armour shines so bright,
Whose wounds are all in front."
Some water then the old man drew,
Whilst I prepared some fire,
And gathered sticks and branches too,
To make the funeral pyre.

But ere we could each rite prepare,

We saw a vision bright,

The hermit's son shone in the air,

Around him brilliant light.

"Grieve not, my father, I am dead,

For through thy virtues I

Have gained a heaven," thus he said,

"High up in yonder sky."

And with these words I saw him rise

Resplendent in the air,

Until at last my straining eyes

Did lose this vision fair.

"Now kill me, prince," the old man said,

"For death were sweet to me ;

But first, since guiltless blood thou 'st shed,

A doom shall fall on thee.

The anguish that my heart did feel

When here my son lay dead,

Shall pierce thy heart more sharp than steel,

Shall haunt thy own death-bed."

And, lighting then the funeral pyre,

The old man and his wife

Went hand in hand into the fire,

And yielded up their life. . . .

* * * * *

This is the crime that haunts my mind,
And fills my troubled breast ;
The curse of that old hermit blind
Now robs me of my rest.
The heedless dart I shot when young
Recoils upon my head ;
For, dying now, I mourn my son,
The lost one worse than dead.
For, had he died, I'd know that he
Had gone to heaven above ;
That there he'd come to welcome me,
And glad me with his love.
But none has robbed me of my son,
Myself the word did say
That drove him to the woods so lone,
Where roam the beasts of prey.
Reach here thy hand, my wife, quite nigh,
Take this cold hand of mine,
That I may feel, before I die,
One last fond clasp of thine.
The room is dark, and death is near,
The death I'd gladly prize,
If but my eldest-born were here
To close his father's eyes."

Words such as these were the last of King Dasarât, and he died still repeating his regrets for the loss of his son Rama, and still reproaching himself with having been so weak as to yield to Kekaya's wishes.



THE END.

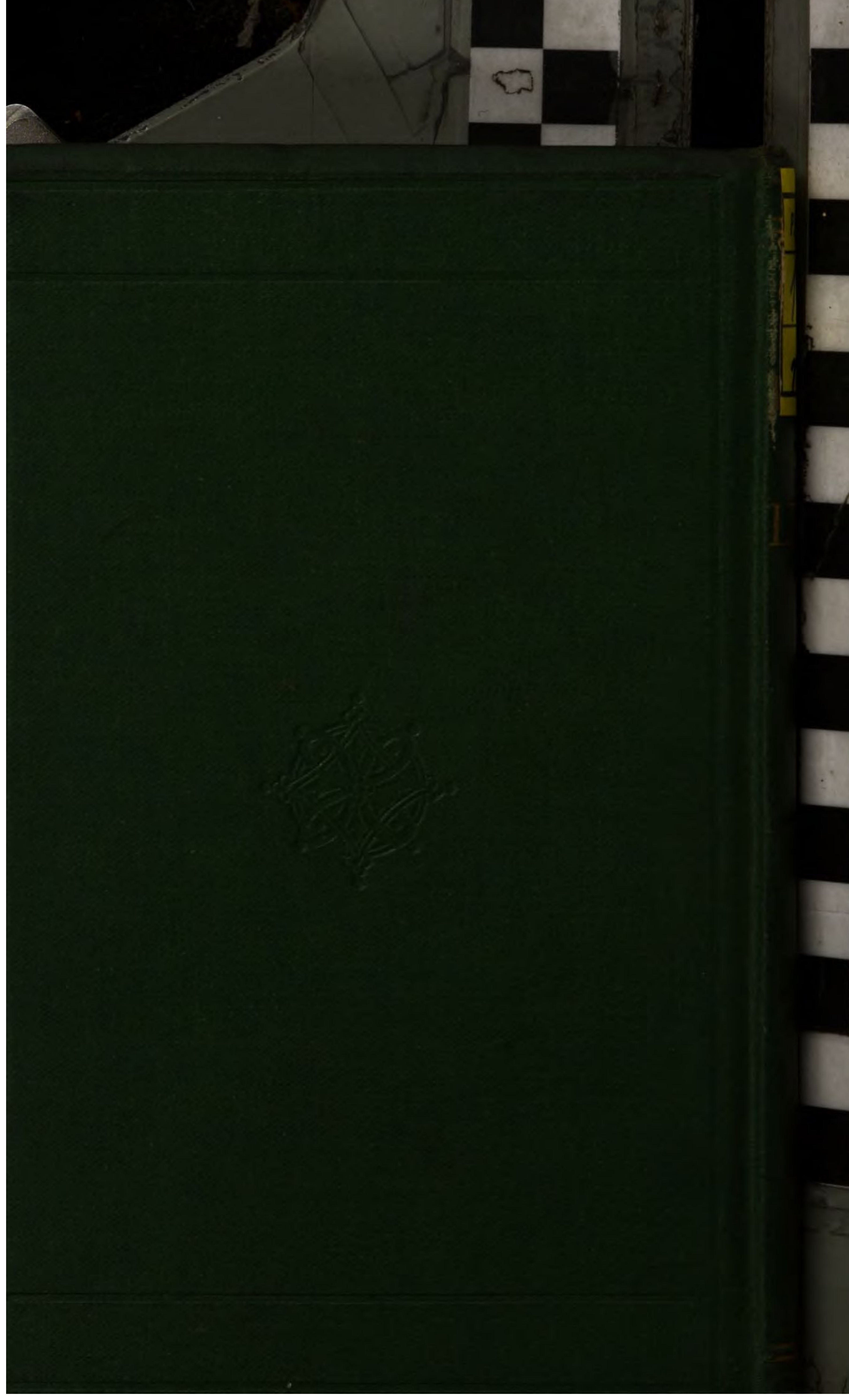
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